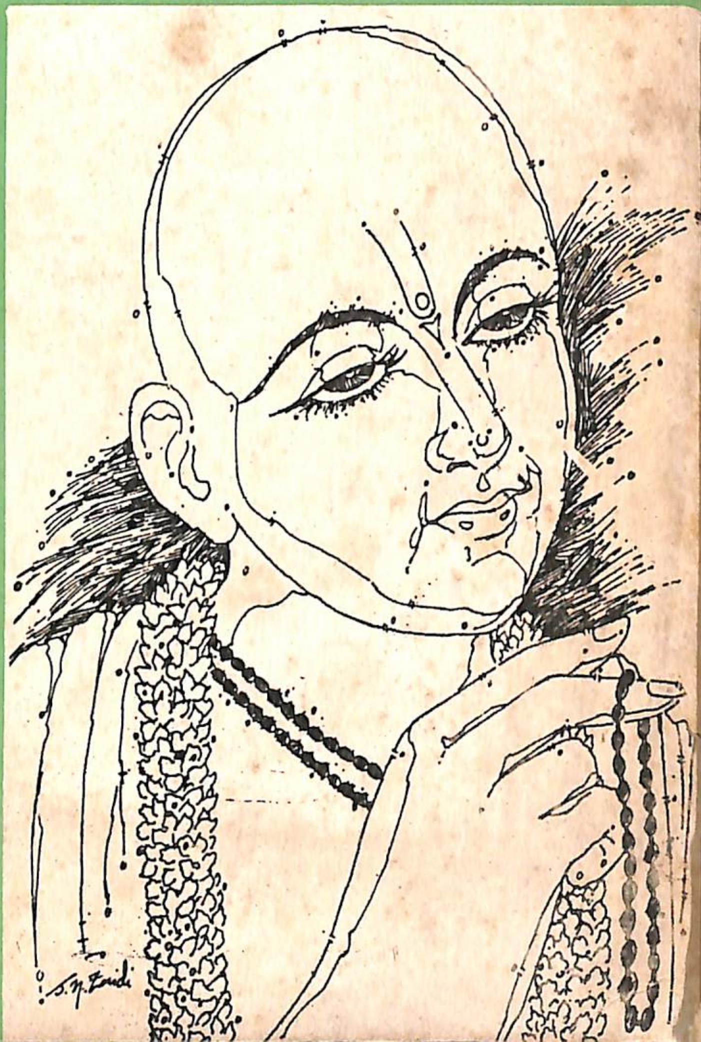


CAITANYA

ASOKE CHATTERJEE SASTRI



Makers of Indian Literature





CAITANYA

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to king Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

CAITANYA

ASOKE CHATTERJEE SASTRI



SAHITYA AKADEMI

SAHITYA AKADEMI

Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 110 001
Block V-B, Rabindra Sarobar Stadium, Calcutta 700 029
29, Eldams Road, Teynampet, Madras 600 018
172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400 014

First Published 1988

Rs. 5

Published by the Sahitya Akademi
and printed at Swatantra Bharat Press, Delhi 110 006

Preface

Caitanya plays a very important role in the social, religious and literary world of eighteenth century Bengal. It is lamentable that this important phase of Bengali culture and religion often went neglected by the scholars. Sometimes one or the other aspects of the many-faceted movement found place in the discussion of the critics. Although Dr. S.K. De's *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* deals comprehensively with the topic in question, a fresh appraisal of Caitanya's life and contribution was badly required. Dr. De's work is not meant for casual readers; but there may be persons who are sufficiently interested to know all about the movement and its leader, yet at the same time shying away from voluminous works. Today a new awakening regarding Caitanyaism is budding through the whole world at the event of its completing five centuries. This is the time for delivering the noble message of love and devotion to people who wish to follow the path of peace, harmony and humility. In the following pages an attempt has been made to meet up the requirement. Here all possible aspects of Gaudiya or Bengal Vaishnavism have been attended to with a view to furnishing the reader with an overall idea.

Caitanya can not be considered as a religious movement only. It has several aspects to its purview. First of all, to understand the reason of its emergence the then background must be thoroughly discussed. The social, religious and

political conditions of Bengal was potent to invite such a movement. Political oppressions, religious sanctions, social taboos all had some fair share to the chaotic condition under which Bengal was suffering. So the background was very important in this case.

Caitanya's life was equally intriguing. His transformation from an erudite scholar to an incarnation of Lord Vishnu was most interesting. Again some of his close associates of Navadvipa had much influence in materialising the coveted image. So his early life and gradual transformation must be kept in view for understanding the secular trend. At the same time the contribution of his associates must be evaluated. Not only in the sphere of deification and progress of the movement but also in the literary field these associates and followers almost started a new era. A completely self-sufficient and novel vista of literature opened around the name of Caitanya. On one hand there are biographical writings depicting various stages of Caitanya's life, complementing and supplementing each other and on the other hand there are the theological works systematising the doctrine of devotional love. These doctrinal writings have a bearing on philosophy also. All these factors combine to give a full shape to what is meant by Bengal school of Vaisnavism.

In this work, I have endeavoured to discuss all these aspects of the school in a compact and lucid way. It is an effort in making an overall and comprehensive study in Caitanyaism and to present the outcome to any interested reader. There is nothing complicated or boastful about the entire scheme of this work. It is a simple and sincere tribute to the magnanimous personality of Caitanya whose idea of devotional love at one stage outshone all complexities of other philosophical systems.

A short summary of the various chapters will show the comprehensiveness of this study. The work starts with a short and general note on Caitanya. Next come the biographical works to mention possible and exhaustive sources of the material of his life history. A thorough study of the background which motivate the emergence of the movement is placed next. This part is most important and all the aspect like social, religious and political conditions have

found their place in the discussion. Caitanya's life-history is obviously the subject-matter of the following chapter. Here no important event, no serious turn of his life is left unmentioned. Special attention is given to the controversial theory of his death. Several contradictory opinions are available in this regard and to clarify the topic very recent researches have also been incorporated as much as possible.

Caitanya's life was self-illuminating but it is fact that he did nothing constructive or systematic to start a religious school. Such a movement was eagerly awaited at that moment. So it is to the initiative of his Navadvipa associates and Vrndavana followers that the Bengal school of Vaisnavism owes its existence. The main architects of this movement deserve special mention, so a short estimate of the roles of Advaita and Nityananda follows. His Vrndavana followers gave much labour to make out an intricate formula to establish its theological and philosophical aspect. The Gaudiya Vaisnavism presents itself as a deliberate historical religion promulgated by a definite founder, but the practical working-out of the system is done by the Vrndavana Gosvamins. To them was due the building up of modern Vrndavana as the principal intellectual and religious centre of the sect where its philosophy, theology, ritualism and aesthetics were formulated. Teachings of Caitanya and the philosophical side of the Caitanyaism also find place in subsequent chapters.

The faith is based on the idea of love or *preman*. This has its root in the *Radhakrishnalila* (divine sports of *Radha* and *Krishna*) of *Bhagavata*. A short outline of this delicate theory is also provided.

The most important contribution of Caitanyaism is perhaps the emergence of *Bhaktirasa* or the emotion of devotion. The six Gosvamins have elevated the status of an emotion to that of a full-fledged sentiment according to the line of the science of poetics. The religious sentiment of devotion is ingeniously fitted in to the scheme of *rasa* theory. In the last chapter Caitanya's contribution is summed up touching all the possible angles of influence.

Such a work of all-embracing capacity was not found in popular level. I hope my sincere effort in summarising the

enormous impact of a magnanimous personality in religious, social and literary field would be appreciated by the connoisseurs.

I am grateful to the authorities of the Sahitya Akademi who have spared no pains for its early publication.

I will be failing in my duties if I do not record the valuable service and assistance I received from some of my colleagues and research scholars.

My special thanks are to my wife Srimati Jharna Chatterjee who gave me all inspirations to get this work prepared with as much perfection as possible.

My granddaughter Toya has cheered me all along and she deserves my full throated applause.

Department of Sanskrit
Calcutta University
14.4.88

ASOKE CHATTERJEE SASTRI

Contents

Introduction

The emergence of Caitanya, popularly known as 'Mahaprabhu' (the great or Supreme Lord), is an epoch-making instance in the history of Bengal as well as India. He may fairly be called the forerunner of the Indian renaissance in the sense that he has evoked wide response from his contemporaries who, although noted in their own fields, became, in comprehensively large numbers, his disciples, transforming their life patterns and attaining transcendental heights through spiritual awakening. Truly of him the poet metrician said that Nimai (his pet name) has assumed this physical form purely from the nectarine hearts of the Bengalis.

It appears that Caitanya is, as it were, the concentrated essence of the nectar (i.e. a sum total of all the good that Bengal possesses), arising out of the hearts of the whole of Bengal. The overwhelming influence of Caitanya and the development of Vaisnava movement, covering a long period of about three centuries (beginning from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century A.D.), caused a diversified manifestation of Bengal. Such an all-encompassing impact of a single personality is hardly found in the society and literature of Bengal. Human society sometimes experiences the birth of a great personality whose mere emergence renders the entire mental firmament saturated with dense clouds of diversified ideas. Likewise the appearance of Caitanya

brought out a total transformation of orthodox values and hailed humanism in the truest sense of the term. He was not a spokesman or preacher of humanism which is known by this name in the European style or of social reform but what must be acceded to is that people belonging to the lower castes or outcastes of the society have attained a fairly respectable position in the post-Caitanya period purely due to the charming yet commanding influence of the Lord (Caitanya). Although the Lord never went against brahminical conventions, the Vaisnava preceptors, belonging to castes other than brahmin, were respected everywhere like the brahmins after the demise of the Lord. This was quite impossible in the then society of Bengal sans the overwhelming impact of the Lord. Although there was no caste barrier in Tantric Cakra, class system was strictly maintained by brahmins in social customs. The system of class division among the brahmins and the non-brahmins that was made and maintained in the Pala reign and was further formulated and nourished carefully by the law books (*smrti sastras*), stood in confrontation with a radical change in the Caitanya period. Keeping pace with the change, made by the revolutionary personality of Caitanya, the Vaisnava Gosvamins (preceptors) composed, in their own ways, *smrti sastras* fully capable of reflecting the changing customs. This helped immensely in bringing about a total destructive crack in the firmly built and deep-rooted wall standing between the brahmins and the non-brahmins. Thus the age-old society was flooded with newer ideas on the one hand and on the other geographical narrowness of the then Bengal gradually disappeared purely due to the impact made by the extensive tour of Caitanya. According to historians, this wideness of mind was a sequel of Bengal's inclusion to the Mughal empire. But even before a period of fifty years of Mughal reign Caitanya and his associates went to visit the pilgrimages of southern, western and northern India. Although administratively Bengal came in contact with the rest of India during the reign of Akbar, religious preceptors of Bengal belonging to Vaisnava faith happened to experience cultured life and ideals of India long before. As a result of it, Nilacala (i.e. Puri), Vrindavana and Mathura especially turned to

Bengali pilgrimage. Thus not only from a religious point of view but in the context of a greater socio-cultural outlook the impact of Caitanya on Bengal may be regarded as a blessing of the Almighty. It may be conceded here that Vaisnavism aroused in us emotion, evoked liberal humanism in us, but could not afford us that strength and ability that make one to sustain and maintain himself in the present day world of stark reality, yet the life of Caitanya, as it were, made an electric impact on the whole of Bengal.

Precisely five hundred years ago Sricaitanya came down to us from his celestial abode and brought about a heavenly unification of mankind irrespective of caste, creed and race, irrespective of the richly luxuriant or the poverty-stricken. He was God but in the disguise of a lover of God. He loved God profoundly and recognised keenly and truly the sparks of God in each and every created being. Only two arms he had, yet with their charming embrace he drew all people towards him under one roof of universal brotherhood.

Before the advent of Caitanya divine love was a word merely to be found in dictionaries; but this became quite tangible and sensible as a pre-eminent living being for once in the history of mankind, in the personality of Caitanya. With a benign personality Caitanya not only attracted human beings but the beasts of wilderness wistfully looked at him whenever he crossed their path. His blissful body shed a lustre like that of a rising sun, but was soothing like that of a lunar orb. The mitigating luminosity of his crimson colour might be compared to molten gold. All opposite qualities were inherent in him cogently and coordinately, so that no one could fathom their depth or measure their breadth. He was meek and mild like a little child, yet he was as stern as a thunderbolt. The profundity of his knowledge and simplicity of behaviour at the same time were astonishing. His kindness was fathomless. It embraced each and everyone without any distinction of caste, colour, race or rank in life whatsoever. He could not tolerate an iota of injustice, but his compassion for sinners was exemplary.

At heart he harboured genuine affection for all people, yet he renounced everyone dear to him for the realisation of spiritual ends. In him the pure divinity descended on this

sullied soil of our mundane plane, but his transcendence from all the impurities was unparalleled. He was one of us, but he was supernatural and not one of us at all. In his peerless personality he encompassed an all-embracing piety for all the created beings and a supra-devotional love for the godhead.

Sources of Caitanya's Life History

The advent of Caitanya is generally regarded as the dawn of renaissance in the medieval Bengal. The reflection of that renaissance and the outburst of that consciousness are found profoundly in the literature of Bengal. Judging from the viewpoint of Bengali literature, this recluse of devotional insanity has tremendously enriched it by his unparalleled life. Hence, Caitanya is regarded as the chief architect of pre-English Bengali literature without composing a single line. Although supernatural element and exaggeration predominantly characterise the works narrating in verse-form the life-history of Caitanya, although these represent Caitanya as the incarnation of Krishna, yet these narrate, in a fairly attractive manner, the biography of a mere man—a mundane mendicant, with all his human sentiments, who possessed nothing but a fine fountain of trivial tears. Moreover, there we get some valuable historical facts regarding the origin and development of Vaisnava movement in Gauda especially in Navadvipa, Santipur, Khardaha, Nilacala and Vrajamandala. Thus they supply invaluable clues in furnishing social history of medieval Bengal. However, we aim here not at dealing elaborately with these works but at showing the sources from which the informations regarding the entire life of a great man have been collected.

Since the passing away of Caitanya some works dealing with his great life have been written both in Sanskrit and

Bengali. Among the works, written in Sanskrit, mention may be made of Murari Gupta's *Srikrishnacaitanyacaritamrta* and Kavikarnapura's *Caitanyacaritamrta* and *Caitanya-candrodaya*.

The authenticity and characteristics of the work of Murari Gupta lies in the fact that he was himself an associate of the Lord and had witnessed the divine sports (*lila*) of Caitanya at Navadvipa. Only for this reason Kavikarnapura, Damodara Pandita, Jayananda, Locanadasa, Vrindavana Dasa and even Krishnadasa Kaviraja made extensive use of Murari Gupta's work in delineating the divine life history of Caitanya taking it to be authentic. The story of Caitanya's early life and his divine activities at Navadvipa have very normally and attractively been delineated in this work. The work of Kavikarnapura has nothing to mention separately. Barring some poetic exaggerations and learned brags it reveals the poet's deep insight into the inner significance of Vaisnava philosophy and the theory of sentiment (*rasatattva*).

Among the works narrating the life history of Caitanya in Bengali, mention may be made of Vrindavana Dasa's *Caitanyabhagavata* at first. The approximate date of its composition has been fixed in 1533 A.D. It has been said that inspired by Nityananda (one of the chief followers of Caitanya), Vrindavana Dasa has written it. His composition is chiefly based on the facts collected from the direct followers of the Lord still living there. The work, therefore, contains no poetic fabrication at all. But it has been modelled on the style and type of Srimadbhagavata; for, Caitanya was, in the eyes of the poet, but the new edition of Srikrishna. Too much importance has been given to Nityananda here who was the poet's revered preceptor. The chief characteristics of the work lie in the lucidity of diction. Most naturally and attractively the very early life of Caitanya has been delineated. He represents Nimai with all his childish pranks. Moreover, *Caitanyabhagavata* vividly depicts the prevailing social picture of medieval Bengal. But above all, the excellence of the work lies in its dealing out human interest most skillfully for which a work becomes natural and real.

Taking chronologically, Locanadasa's *Caitanyamangala* is the second book dealing with Caitanya's life. This work

differs from Jayananda's work of identical title which is obviously of a later period. Compared to Vrindavana Dasa's work it narrates the life of Caitanya briefly, but it is a popular work read and sung widely by the devotees in the way Mangalakavyas and Pancalis were sung. Its importance lies in the fact that it narrates elaborately the news of a particular school of Gaudiya Vaisnavism technically known as *gauranagaravada* and also its procedures. The historicity of the facts, dealt with in this work is, however, negligible.

Amidst many spurious facts Jayananda's *Caitanyamangala* provides us a quite different and novel information about the original residence of Caitanya. It declares, in no uncertain terms, the fact that Caitanya himself emerged from a highly learned and respectable Oriya brahmin family of Jajpur and had migrated to Srihatta (now Sylhet in Bangladesh) owing to disagreement with the king of Orissa. It represents further a novel information about the passing away of Caitanya. In the lack of sufficient evidence such conceptions are barely rejectable.

Krishnadasa Kaviraja's *Caitanyacaritamrta* is a unique production among all the works narrating the life of Caitanya. If we take a particular work to be great in the entire Bengali literature of medieval Bengal *Caitanyacaritamrta* stands first and foremost in that way. It is a unique combination of philosophy, history and poetic composition. In the greatness of lemma, in the naturality of its treatment, in the sweetness and lucidity of its diction, in the process of dealing out pure devotion, no other work in the medieval Bengal forms a parallel to it. It is an authentic work for the Vaisnavas. Amidst poetic exaggerations and sparkles of supernatural happenings, the touch of a total human being with all its humanistic elements are occasionally met with in the work of Krishnadasa Kaviraja. Although *Caitanyacaritamrta* is a valuable work for the Vaisnavas it aims not at narrating the life sketch of Caitanya chiefly but at dealing out a lucid exegesis of divine love and reverence for which the very life of Caitanya itself incarnates. The abstruse philosophy of Vaisnava faith has most scientifically been explained in an aphoristic vein. Above all, it is an unparalleled and unending mine of various informations regarding the society and culture

of medieval Bengal. In assessing its place in the history of Bengali literature it has been argued that whatever may be its value to the devotee of the faith, the stupendous work is not a poem, but a poetic curiosity of *sastric* knowledge, legendary lore, salacious fancy, technical facility and uninspired ingenuity. Broadly speaking, this has little truth in it.

Govinda Dasa's *Kadca* is another work dealing with the life history of Caitanya. Critics differ widely as to the authenticity and antiquity of the work. It has been argued that the *Kadca* belongs to an obviously later date. It is to be noted here that *Kadca* in Bengali means diary. Although Vaisnava devotees of Bengal doubt the genuineness of the incidents narrated here, some facts are to be noted.

The Background of Caitanya's Emergence

To illustrate the power of his philosophy of love, an outline of the time of Caitanya's descent on this earth is to be sketched. Caitanya appeared in Navadvipa in the province of Bengal during the Islamic reign in India. Hussain Shah was then the ruler of Bengal, and his capital was in the town of Ramakeli (now in Maldah). To comprehend a clearcut picture of Caitanya's emergence we have to go a few centuries back while the political atmosphere of Bengal was in doldrums. For, when erosion begins in society, eating into its vitals, the source of that erosion is to be sought in the hoary past. Historians differ in the exact period of Laksmanasena's ascendence to throne of Bengal after the sad demise of Vallalasena. But on the basis of the facts found, it may fairly be said that Laksmanasena became the king of Gauda in 1069 A.D. As a person, Laksmanasena was a man of letters himself and a patron of learned persons but he lacked that administrative skill which makes a king a king. During his reign, the noted Muslim Fakir Seikh Jalaluddin Tabriji came to preach Sufism in Bengal. By the aid of his keen intellect and illusive power he impressed the king known popularly as Ray Laksmania and with the grace of the king got an easy access to the inner apartment of the royal palace. This helped him immensely to influence the powerful royal officials. The entire Hindu society was segregated and alienated. The

Buddhist monks and personalities, who held a dignified position in the Pala reign, were being dishonoured. They were looked down with contempt and disrespect. Persons, belonging to the Sakti cult, were trying their best to keep their dominance over the society. Only the brahmins were dominating the entire society with the help of their self-invented scriptural ordinances contained in the *smrti sastras*, astrological literature and in the so-called *kulagranthas* (works dealing with high ancestry). The Vaisnavas were yet to appear on the scene. The detrimental sequel of *kulinatantra*, devised by Vallalasena, has disintegrated and tore asunder the Hindu society. Reciprocal animosity and blaming were widely prevalent in religion and in social customs. In fact, there was no social, political and religious life in Gaudavanga in the twelfth century. There was a total collapse in the administration also. The second wife of Laksmanasena was a power loving lady who herself proclaimed royal commands by the name of the king. This gave ample scope for the royal officers to infiltrate in administrative works. This resulted in the creation of class struggle in the court of Laksmanasena. At the same time the concealed royal affairs were brought out in public destroying thereby the dignity of the royal palace. The oppressed Buddhists engaged themselves in spying work with the aggressive Muslims. Caste animosity and class struggle, accrued from king Vallalasena's policy, ate into the vitals of the society. As a result, feudals and bureaucrats brought the administrative machinery of the Sena kings to reins completely. Rank and file of the society under the reign of Sena kings had to undergo untold miseries and oppressions. These collectively made easier the advent of alien powers. Bakhtiyar's invasion in Navadvipa was but a mere result of these causes.

Since the fall of the Sena dynasty Gaudavanga had to experience a series of rise and fall of different power loving yet inept kings and rulers. For nearly four centuries there were ups and downs of many kingdoms. Owing to these administrative instabilities the political, social, economic, religious and cultural conditions of the people completely collapsed. Some stray instances of Muslim oppression are found in the contemporary literatures. Hindu temples were

arbitrarily and extensively destroyed. Kalapahad, the notorious Hindu renegade, demolished Hindu temples extensively. Disturbed by the anti-Hindu activities of this fanatic, the Hindu landlords of Gauda were said to have sought the help of Emperor Akbar. Demoralisation was rampant in the then Bengal. The Sena kings brought from their homelands (i.e. Karnataka) the custom of appointing female attendants apt in dancing and singing (*devadasis*) in the Hindu temples. These *devadasis* were arbitrarily used in sexual enjoyments. Wealthy and influential persons of the society were deeply plunged in immoral activities. There were maid-servants of tender age in almost all houses of well-to-do persons. They were used in lustful purposes.

Hussain Shah ascended the throne of Gauda in 1493 A.D. when Caitanya was but a teenager. From a historical standpoint it will not be a hyperbole to say that Hussain Shah was the first ruler who brought in Bengal a fairly political stability. He, therefore, deserves special mention. As far as we know from the contemporary records Hussain hailed from a Syed family of Tirruij in Arab. His father Syed Asraf came to India for a livelihood. A simple-hearted brahmin of Candpara gave the teenager Hussain a safe shelter. Later on, Hussain was appointed a servant of Subuddhi Roy, king of Gauda. Hussain was loyal to his lord. Hence, the king conferred on him the responsibility of digging a tank. A lot of money, allotted for the work, had been stolen by Hussain. The king, finding him guilty, lashed him. Later on, Hussain gave the king a more cruel retort. He compelled the king to adopt Islamism. According to another anecdote Hussain took a service in the royal court. In course of time he gave ample proof of his intellect and administrative skill. In the mean time there was serious political instability in Bengal under the Abyssian reign. Hussain, with the assistance of the royal guards of the palace, killed Mujaffar, the then ruler of Bengal, and became the king of Gauda.

Since his ascendence to the throne of Bengal Hussain Shah extended the periphery of his empire through a few expeditions and brought peace and stability in the country. The period of his (1493 to 1519 A.D.) and his son Nussarat Shaha's (1519-1533 A.D.) reign is regarded as the golden age in the

history of the medieval Bengal. Muslim tyranny over the Hindus was no more poignant. Hindus like Maladhara Basu, Rupa and Sanatana, etc. were appointed in responsible high posts in the royal administration. The influential persons of Hindu and Muslim societies were becoming closer reciprocally. As a result, aristocratic Muslims like Paragal Khan and others were too eager to listen to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and learned Hindus were also learning Arabian and Persian languages. Owing to their belonging to the royal court in respect of administration and culture, the Hindus too were accepting some Muslim customs. The political stability of the country helped the learned Hindus to compose law books (*sastra*) and commentaries with a new inspiration. Although religious tolerance and liberalism characterised the very foundation of Hussain Shah's mentality to some extent Nussarat Shah had bitter animosity with the Hindus.

The imperial richness of the citizen was proverbial. Economic poverty was negligible, but mental bankruptcy in the form of meanness and narrowness of heart was rampant. Free thinking and new thoughts in the field of philosophy and literature were practically non-existent. Learned persons known as pundits were engaged in writing commentaries and sub-commentaries on the most dialectical type of logic known as *navya nyaya*. These pundits were experts in detecting fallacies in other's arguments, but their own method of living and personal behaviour with fellow persons were itself full of fallacies and contradictions. They knew how to deliver argumentative discourses on the oneness or secondlessness of *brahman*, but in their personal living they hesitated to touch even the shadow of the so-called untouchables who had been ousted from the pale of the then Hindu society. High and strong barricades of orthodox *varnasramadharma* segregated the Hindu society into hundreds of water-tight compartments.

The broad banks of the Holy river Ganges of Navadvipa were full of eminent scholars and their pupils numbered several thousands. They devoted their entire time and energy in discussing the metaphysical contradictions and their solutions contained in the neo-logic. Commentaries and subcommentaries were being piled up on one side and on the

other a barricade of Himalayan proportion was being built to separate the higher class from the lower one. When the pundits were brooding over hair-splitting differences in the definitions of invariable concomitants (*vyapti*) thousands of Hindus were getting converted to the Muslim faith to join the casteless society of the Islamic brotherhood as preached by them.

The people were groaning under the pressure of brahmanical autocracy and the tyrannical oppressions of their land-lords. They were demanding social justice and human fellowship, but were denied this. Advaitacarya, a great lover of humanity felt the pangs of the general people, and finding no other remedy, prayed wistfully to the Almighty for his kind descent on this mundane plane as the saviour of the oppressed ones. His prayer was answered and the Lord did come down in the benign personality of Caitanya.

The entire nation was longing for such a graceful person who was an ocean of purest love and had profoundest sympathy for all human beings. The universality of the teachings and magnanimity of Caitanya's loving heart combined to bring about an outpouring of bliss which the people breathed in the peaceful atmosphere of divine calmness. Thus it appears that Advaitacarya led the Vaisnava society of pre-Caitanya period. It represents in no uncertain terms the fact that before the emergence of Caitanya there was a school of a few dedicated Vaisnavas in Bengal. Their activities were confined to close-door chanting of the name of Hari and to some stray religious discourses held in strict secrecy only for the fear of Muslim tyrants.

The spiritual life of the people of India in pre-Caitanya period was also deplorable. The place of Supreme reality, coated with so-called religion and hypocrisy, has been captured by dry customs and conventions. Truth was replaced by falsity, good by evil and Supreme reality by meaningless social customs.

In the southern India the religion preached by Sriyamuna-carya and Ramanujacarya has subsequently been characterised by the doctrine proclaiming the all-pervasiveness of illusory power (*mayavada*). Even in the social customs of the Ramanuja school there was an obvious predominance of the

customs advocated by the *smrti* books. A narrow caste system was prevalent among the followers of Sriramanuja. There were religious people too in the pre-Caitanya age, but religion had a different meaning to them. They were not inclined to listen to devotional chanting of the holy name of Krishna, nor they joined the company of virtuous persons. Visit to pilgrimages was what they thought to be the chief objective of religion. The Jamayet or Ramayet school of Vaisnavism led by Ramananda differed from the former ones particularly in one respect. The followers of Ramananda preached their religion irrespective of caste and creed. Moreover, the contribution of Kabir, one of the noted disciples of Ramananda, to the religion and social history of India deserves special mention. Hailed from a Muslim weaver family Kabir tried his best to pacify the prevailing animosity among the warring Hindus and Muslims. The short songs known as *doha*, written by Kabir reveal that the god of the Hindus and the Muslims is identical, there is practically no difference between the main tenets of either sects.

Mention here should also be made of Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. According to some Nanak founded the Sikh sect in the fifteenth century A.D. upon the main tenets of Kabir's faith. However, Nanak emerged when the Hindus and the Muslims stood in confrontation with each other. In order to appease that animosity Nanak is said to have founded a political religion taking from each sect some moral teachings. Sikhism was indeed a melange of these heterogeneous doctrines blended together to meet the need of the era. Ramananda and Kabir were born in the Northern India and Nanak preached his religion in the Punjab. They all tried their best to appease the prevailing animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims by their respective religious doctrines. But history records that their endeavour fell flat.

The entire religious firmament of the then India was covered with dense clouds of hypocrisy, intolerance and reciprocal animosity. Bengal practically was on the verge of total annihilation in respect of religion, political turmoil and morality. The corrosive effect of the so-called religious conventionalism ate into the vitals of the society in its every corner. This state of serious anomaly has very vividly been

delineated by one of the biographers of Caitanya.

The people were engaged in speaking ill of each other. The chanting of the holy name of Krishna was nowhere heard. The pundits and virtuous persons were afraid of taking the holy name of Krishna at the time of ablution which they thought to be highly sanctifying. The students and the teachers were engaged in dry discussion of gnosticism. They were deeply engrossed in material enjoyments, nobody even cared to listen to the holy name of Krishna. In such an atmosphere Caitanya emerged as the saviour of the oppressed humanity, as the man of the age.

Caitanya's Ancestry

Caitanya was the son of Jagannatha Mishra and the grandson of Upendra Mishra. His forefathers originally hailed from Jajpur in Orissa. Advaitacarya's father Kuvera Pandita was an inhabitant of Srihatta, which is one of the most cultured districts of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Kuvera Pandita requested Upendra Mishra to come and settle in Srihatta and he agreed to do so and settled in Dacca Dakshin, a small town in the Sylhet district where the ancestral house of Caitanya still stands. According to some scholars, however, Jita Mishra, the great-grandfather of Upendra Mishra had settled in Srihatta and lived on the bank of the Buroganga.

Jagannatha was the seventh son of Upendra Mishra. Jagannatha's mother was Kalavati, and as she was exquisitely beautiful, everybody called her Sobhavati (paragon of beauty). Jagannatha Mishra married Saci Devi, daughter of Nilambara Chakravarty who was also a resident of Srihatta. Saci Devi gave birth to eight daughters, all of whom died at an early age. Her ninth issue was a son and was named Visvarupa. When Visvarupa was ten years old Caitanya sanctified the womb of Saci Devi. Sobha Devi, the grandmother of Caitanya had a vision that the Lord would be coming down to the earth as the son of Saci Devi and that he would be born on the bank of the river Ganges. Sobha Devi entreated her son Jagannatha and Saci Devi therefore to start for Nabadvipa and expressed her desire that this son when

born should be shown to her. Saci Devi promised to do so. Jagannatha and Saci Devi came to Navadvipa and resided there. It is a well-known fact that during Caitanya's sojourn to East Bengal he went to Sylhet to meet his grandmother Sobha Devi to keep the promise of Saci Devi. He had also presented his grandmother an image of the deity Radhakrishna and this idol is still preserved there for us to see.

Jagannatha Mishra was a great scholar. The title of Purandara was conferred on him by all the pundits and he was often called Mishra Purandara.

When Caitanya descended on this mundane plane of ours it was the evening of Saturday, 27th Falguna, 893 B.S. For a mere forty-eight years Caitanya stayed on this earth and disappeared from us in A.D. 1534 during a *samkirtana utsava* in the temple of Tota Gopinatha in Puri. Mystery hovers over his passing away there.

During his life time Pathan kings of the Lodi dynasty namely Bahllal, Sikandar, Ibrahim and the Mughal kings like Babar and Humayun sat on the throne of Delhi and ruled India. Contemporary Sultans, ruling Bengal, were Barbak, Feroz Shah, Nassiruddin Mohammad Shah, Muzaffar Shah, Hussain Shah and Giasuddin Mohammad Shah. During Caitanya's life-time itself Vasco da Gama, the famous Portuguese explorer and navigator, arrived at the western coast of India navigating from Europe around the Cape of Good Hope and set up a direct commercial link as well as cultural link between Christian Europe and India.

Life

On the tranquil evening of Saturday February 27, A.D. 1486 when the serene Ganges was rhythmically flowing and the lea beyond was beaming beneath the rising full moon, Caitanya took birth at Mayapura, Navadvipa which was popularly known as the then Oxford of Bengal in the academic world. The moment, the great Lord appeared, characterises itself with auspiciousness; for, the entire atmosphere of Navadvipa was then traditionally surcharged with the chanting of the holy name of Harikrishna due to the occurrence of the lunar eclipse.

Different names were given to the new born baby. He was named by his mother as 'Nimai' after the Neem (margosa) tree under which he was born and also from its bitterness to keep off Yama, the god of death, who had snatched away eight children from her lap. The ladies of the neighbourhood called him Gauranga as because the child bore an extremely fair complexion. Nilambara Chakravarty, his maternal grandfather, finding the marks of a great man in all the limbs of the child and judging the horoscopic calculation of the zodiacal signs all in the ascendent, named him Visvambhara (the saviour and the sustainer of the universe). For, Nilambara observed that the all-round scarcity, that was then prevalent in the country, would soon disappear on his auspicious advent and also he would drive out the death of devotion by the felicity of love divine.

According to the prevailing social custom the new-born babe's innate inclination was examined by putting such articles as paddy, fried rice, clod of earth, gold, silver and book, etc. in front of him. In the case of this new-born babe a copy of the *Srimadbhagavata*, the sacred book of Hindu culture, in addition to other articles mentioned above was placed before him. People, assembled to grace the occasion, found to their utter astonishment that the child stretched out his little arms and embraced the *Srimadbhagavata*. The instance, according to some, obviously indicates the future mission of the baby.

From the very childhood a peculiar trend of the boy was noticed. Unless he heard the holy name of Hari the child would weep. The house of Jagannatha Mishra therefore, always echoed with the blissful name of Hari. He would dance enchantingly whenever he heard the chant of the holy name. Ladies in his neighbourhood used to sing the same to amuse themselves on the lovely dance of the beautiful child. Thus Nimai kept them always engaged in chanting the name of Hari.

Since the early years of his life Nimai's childish pranks were an object of painful alarm to the members of his family as well as to the neighbours. But what made him check all the odds was the commanding yet sweet presence of his elder brother Visvarupa (Visvambhara) who recognised Nimai to be none other than the baby Krishna himself and loved him as such. Nimai used to annoy the people, assembled to take ablution in the Ganges by his childish behaviour. But whenever complaints were lodged to Visvarupa against him, he gave Nimai only a mild scolding, which brought amazing changes in the latter's character. Visvarupa always remained busy in academic affairs and religious discourses. Navadvipa was then the Oxford of Bengal where cultivation of traditional studies (such as *smrti*, *navyanyaya*, and other branches of philosophy) was done profusely. In such a centre of traditional learning (usually called *pathasala* or *catuspathi*) which was situated at the house of Advaitacarya, discourses on *Srimadbhagavata* were often given by the devotees. When Nimai used to arrive at the *pathasala* of Advaita, the devotees including Advaitacarya were so much enraptured by

the exquisitely charming beauty of the boy Nimai that they remained gazing at him.

Nimai displayed supernatural traits of character since his early boyhood. Some such traits that completely wondered his parents were his sitting on the coiled bed of a huge-hooded serpent, the tinkle of anklets proceeding from his bare feet, the marks of foot-prints of Visnu on the floor of Nimai's bedroom, etc.

In the meantime a mishap took place in Jagannatha Mishra's family. Visvarupa, the elder son of Jagannatha, all of a sudden, renounced the world on the very eve of his wedding ceremony. He embraced the ecclesiastical order under the name of Sankaracarya. This gave a heavy blow to the affectionate parents whose grief knew no bounds. The sorrow-stricken devotees resolved to follow the footsteps of their revered preceptor on the suddenness and unexpectedness of the incident. But Advaitacarya refrained from doing so. However, Visvarupa's renunciation brought some noticeable changes in Nimai's restless character. The waywardness with which Nimai was so identical seems to have been disappeared to a great extent. With soothing words and sweet manners he always cheered up his grief-stricken parents.

Soon Nimai's exceptional intellect left its indelible mark on his character. In no time he easily took a mastery over the subjects he took up for study with the aid of his sharp intellect and wonderful memory. Quite the same type of brilliance in academic affairs had been displayed by his elder brother Viṣvarupa. Jagannatha Mishra was frightened by this profound scholarship of Nimai; for, by dint of such perusal Visvarupa realising the transitoriness of the world, renounced it. A grief-stricken father like Jagannatha, therefore, decided to make Nimai give up his studies. But the sequel was grave. Obstruction made Nimai more obstinate and turbulent.

Restricted by his father Nimai used some tricks for the resumption of his study. One day Nimai was seen seated upon a pile of broken cooking pots which are regarded by Hindu ladies as unclean, requiring thereby special ablutions for purification. His biographers relate how on this occasion the child gave out the philosophy of good and evil, purity

and impurity. Asked by his mother to come away, he refused arguing, "No impurity resides in these pots in which you have cooked the offerings to Visnu. The pots used in cooking for Visnu can never be polluted. By contact with these pots other places have also become holy". Nimai's real purpose in annoying his parents was to oblige them to let him return to his studies. He, therefore, said to his mother, "If I am not allowed to renew my study, you may be sure I will never come down from this impure heap." Realising their mistake his parents, however, allowed him, to his great joy, to resume his studies.

In the mean time the investiture ceremony of Nimai with sacred thread was duly performed by his father. Soon after the ceremony Jagannatha got him admitted into the grammar school of Gangadasa. Nimai displayed extraordinary academic acumen by mastering all the intricacies of grammar, logic, rhetorics, etc. within a very short time. Thus he acquired the highest academic distinction and unanimous acclaim from both the teacher and the taught. Even the senior students of the school like Murari Gupta, Mukunda Datta, Krishnananda and Kamalakanta were at a loss when Nimai advanced them with riddles in logic. They were often refuted by the extraordinary genius of their junior fellow and thereafter found to beat retreat. Nimai's genius rose to such an acme in such a teen age that he wrote a commentary on the intricate *kalapavyakarana*, a celebrated Sanskrit grammar by Sarvavarman. The commentary is regrettably not extant now.

In the mean time when Nimai was continuing his study in the school of Gangadasa for the second time his father Jagannatha Mishra died almost unexpectedly. The suddenness of the grave incident saddened both the mother and the boy greatly. Nimai consoled his mother in her sad bereavement with soothing words of love and affection. Although the absence of Jagannatha added new aspects to Nimai's impertinent attitude not a bit negligence was found in his pursuit of study. Moreover, the grief-stricken widow passed over the feelings of sorrow at the loving sight of her beloved son. This made her devote herself exclusively to the loving service of her son.

On completion of his studies Nimai started a traditional school at the house of Mukunda Sanjaya, a wealthy citizen of Navadvipa. He displayed the same proficiency both in teaching and training. Nimai replaced the old system of cramming in teaching, prevalent among the pundits of Navadvipa then with the scientific one devised by him. Thus he acquired an overwhelming reputation in teaching. He became so renowned as an ideal professor that his fame spread far and wide and students from all corners of the country flocked to join his school. Navadvipa was then the stronghold of innumerable learned savants far famed in different branches of study. Nimai, elated with the fame thus acquired, often invited his contemporary scholars in literary discussions. But very few dared to confront him in academic controversies. His keen intellect, sharpened and irrefutable arguments, and over all, a profound knowledge in all the branches of study made the opponents a beat retreat.

In the mean time Nimai's marriage with Laksmi Devi, the daughter of Vallabhacarya took place. Laksmi Devi was a perfect and ideal housewife who assisted fully her aged mother-in-law in performing household chores and dedicated herself fully in the holy service of her hallowed husband.

In course of time Nimai's fame spread far and wide both as a teacher and as a scholar. Pundits from different corners of the country used to visit Navadvipa as it was a centre of learning. One day, Nimai entertained as a guest, a great Vaisnava monk Sri Isvarapuri, by name. He was a disciple of Sri Madhavendrapuri of the Madhava cult. Nimai appreciated the intrinsic merits of *Krishnalilamrta*, the book written by him and spoke highly of it. When he was asked by the author to point out the defects of the book, Nimai said that there can be no defects in the work of a true devotee of Srikrishna under whose inspiration he writes. This Vaisnava saint, with his extreme asceticism, intellectual acumen and ecstatic devotion to the Supreme Lord, made an abiding impression on the heart of Nimai who met him everyday to hold religious discourses. This companionship gave a decisive impetus to his devotional sensibilities. It is this Isvarapuri whom Nimai subsequently accepted as his spiritual guide at Gaya.

Nimai's meeting with Kesava Bhatta was a milestone in the former's life. It won him greatest victory in secular learning and scholarship. Kesava Bhatta of Kashmir, perhaps the greatest champion-scholar of the then India, arrived at Navadvipa in course of his unimpeded victorious tour with his host of elephants and horses, his wealth and the various presents which he had won from his vanquished rivals as token of their submissive homage. The advent of the champion scholar gave a stirring knock to the academic world of the city. Scholars of Navadvipa, knowing him to be unchallengeable and invincible fled from the city on some pretexts. One evening when the young Nimai was seated with his pupils on the bank of the Ganges, this champion scholar happened to arrive there. He was requested by Nimai to recite a hymn in apotheosis of the Ganges. At this, the champion scholar began to brag of his poetic genius reciting extempore a hundred verses (*slokas*) on the same at a stretch. On being asked to explain the merits and demerits of particular verse of the hymn quoted by Nimai, Kesava Bhatta, though utterly astonished within at the wonderful memory of Nimai, boastingly declared that there could be no defects in his hymn. But Nimai pointed out five kinds of errors in the beginning, in the middle and in the end of the *sloka*, despite five kinds of merits therein. Nimai said further that "poetry jewelled with high sentiments and poetics if marred by a single blemish, resembles a handsome body rendered loathsome by white leprosy". This discomfiture had a marvellous effect on the champion scholar. It was the turning point of his spiritual life. He belonged to Nimbarka cult. On that very night the goddess of learning Sarasvati through the worship and grace of whom the scholar defeated his opponents in polemic controversies all over the country, appeared before him in his dream. The goddess advised him to surrender his all to the lotus-feet of Nimai who was none but the Supreme Lord himself appeared on the mundane domain to curb down the vain self-aggrandisement of the pedants, the affluent and the well-born, but to be attainable by his submissive, loyal and loving devotees. The following day the defeated conqueror met Nimai who expounded to him the following moral.

"To consecrate body, mind, soul and property to the loving service of Srikrishna is the summum bonum of real learning—avoid arrogance—be humble and devote yourself whole heartedly to the worship of the lotus-feet of Srikrishna with kindness to all beings (*jivas*)." With this Nimai embraced him by which genuine devotion, true asceticism and real knowledge dawned upon him and he was blessed.

At this overwhelming triumph over the champion scholar Kesava Bhatta in literary discourse, the name of Nimai spread all over the country. By this victory he gained the title *vadisimha* (the lion of his opponents). He was regarded thereafter as the foremost scholar of the day.

In a very early stage of life probably when he was about twenty Nimai made an extensive tour of East Bengal as a visiting professor to impart the students ideal education. Prior to his visit to East Bengal his fame as the leading scholar and his name as the author of the commentary on *kalapavyakarana*, accepted as the recognised textbook of grammar throughout the country, spread in the circle of academicians and students. This helped him receive cordial reception wherever he went and whomsoever he taught. Overwhelmed by his sweet yet commanding personality and wondered by his finest mode of teaching the pious rich of East Bengal showered on him their most valuable wealth. Thus Nimai's tour of East Bengal won him renown and riches alike.

During this teaching tour a brahmin named Tapana Mishra, father of the great Raghunatha Bhatta directed by a dream, came to Nimai to seek a solution as regards the means and the ends of human existence. In unambiguous words and distinct sentences Nimai told him that the only means in the iron age of *kali* to attain that end is the chanting (*samkirtana*) of the holy names of Srikrishna. No other means of deliverance is, however, left for achieving this purpose. Nimai further advised him to settle in Varanasi for his spiritual progress and mental uplift. Later on, this Tapana Mishra became one of the staunch followers of Caitanya.

While Nimai was touring East Bengal his wife Laksmi Devi suddenly died of snake-bite at her father-in-law's house in Navadvipa. This mishap brought Nimai back to Navadvipa.

As a result of his teaching Nimai brought with him immense wealth in the form of presents from his students and pious devotees. The premature demise of Laksmi Devi saddened the husband and the mother-in-law alike. However, at the earnest request of his mother Nimai married for the second time, Visnupriya Devi, the daughter of Sanatana Mishra, the court pundit. It was a highly expensive wedding ceremony. The bulk of expenses was voluntarily borne by Buddhimanta Khan, an affluent landlord of Navadvipa. It was a rare match as Visnupriya was equally beautiful like her husband. Moreover, she was characterised specially by some rare human virtues like kindness, sympathy, benevolence and selfless devotion.

When the reputation of Nimai as the foremost scholar of Navadvipa reached its pinnacle, he proceeded with some of his pupil disciples to Gaya with the ostensible purpose of performing the annual rites in honour of his deceased father and ancestors. In the district of Bhagalpur he visited the Mandara hills and offered his prostrated obeisances to the holy image of Srimadhusudana installed there from time immemorial. After his arrival there Nimai went inside the sanctum sanctorum to have a glimpse of the lotus-feet of Lord Gadadhara, surrounding which the brahmin priests were singing the immaculate glories in eulogy of the same. On hearing this Nimai was overwhelmed with eternal bliss so much so that the eightfold symptoms of ecstatic emotions began to manifest themselves in his body to the great delight and utter astonishment of the brahmins present there. Sri Isvarapuri, whom Nimai had once entertained as a guest at Mayapura, happened to arrive there at that very moment. Isvarapuri's joy knew no bounds to find Nimai there in such a state of bliss. Both greeted each other with a loving embrace and overflowing tears of joy. Filled with intense emotion Nimai then addressed Isvarapuri in the following words :

Great devotees like thyself are themselves holy shrines (*tirtha*), as the Supreme Lord Gadadhara always dwells in their heart of hearts. So, their pilgrimage to holy places simply enriches their purity all the more, otherwise they have no need for such pilgrimage. Thy lotus-feet are the sanctum

sanctorum of all sacred shrines. Be thou merciful, O Isvarapuri, to deliver me from this ocean of the world by opening my inner spiritual eyes long sealed in the gloom of nescience with the spike of the eye-salve of transcendental knowledge.

In response to Nimai's ardent appeal Isvarapuri said to the Lord, "O Pundit! The very sight of your handsome personality, your unparalleled scholarship and immaculate character gives me unspeakable delight and makes me believe that you are no other than godhead himself. Since the day I saw you at Mayapura, I have no other thought than that of your charming personality and sweet amiable behaviour which have taken entire possession of my heart."

Nimai prayed for his spiritual initiation from Isvarapuri who initiated him with the ten lettered *gopalamantra*, muttering which Nimai plunged himself in the nectarine ocean of divine love for Krishna. Although Nimai did not require any initiation from a preceptor, yet as an Acarya, he enacted this divine sport of taking initiation from a preceptor simply to teach the people who are aspirant after emancipation and love of Krishna (*krishnaprema*) the indispensable necessity of initiation from a genuine preceptor (*sadguru*) after unconditional self-surrender.

The initiation brought a complete change in Nimai's character. His heart was completely filled with divine love for Srikrishna. An utterly second ego within him was roused as if by the sudden touch of a magic wand. His yearning for Srikrishna became so poignant that he saw Krishna everywhere and in every moment. Nimai unbosomed his heart's grief to all those devotees such as Advaitacarya, Srivasa, Murari Gupta, Mukunda Datta, Gadadhara and others, at the separation from his beloved Krishna of whom he had a glance at Kanainatshala near Rajmahal, on his way back from Gaya. He enquired of them as to how, when and where he would find his beloved Krishna whose separation was living death to him. He explained to his pupils that the chanting of the holy name of Krishna is the acme of all learning, and himself taught them how to perform musical chanting of Krishna (*krishnakirtana*). He narrated to his mother the terrible sufferings finite selves (*jiva*) have to undergo in the cycles of birth and re-birth in the mother's wombs and

requested her to chant ceaselessly the name of Srikrishna.

At the house of Srivasa, Nimai began to spend the whole night with the devotees of Navadvipa in chanting the holy name of Srikrishna. This nocturnal congregational chanting in the company of bonafide devotees continued for a year and swelled in the hearts of the devotees the ocean of ecstatic bliss.

Mortified deeply at the non-devotional tendency of the people of the world, the Vaisnavas, under the lead of Advaitacarya, earnestly prayed for the immediate manifestation of his divinity, whereupon Nimai as the Lord revealed himself one day in the Visnu temple of Srivasa and vouchsafed to them the boons prayed for. This is known as the grand revelation of the Lord, lasting for twentyone hours. The boon solicited by poor Sridhara, viz. the eternal service of the Lord, the gift bestowed on Haridasa whom the Lord designated as Prahlada in visible form, and the blessings received by the maid-servant of Srivasa who was named *Sukhi* (fortunate), bear ample testimony to the fact that even the poorest of the poor, from the worldly point of view, may be blessed with the richest treasure of love divine of the spiritual domain, if he or she be a genuine devotee of the Lord. Even a four year old girl, Narayani, niece of Srivasa and mother of Vrindavana Dasa, the author of *Caitanyabhagavata* was blessed with the sacred remnants of the tasted food of the Lord the rarest grace that ever falls even to the lot of the denizens of heaven.

Nityananda's joining the banner of Caitanya in preaching the holy name of Srikrishna is a remarkable incident in the history of Vaisnavas. While the musical chanting of the holy name, envisaged by Caitanya, began to spread far and wide, Nityananda, the alter ego of Caitanya joined the camp. He made an extensive tour of India in quest of the Supreme Lord Srikrishna. In the course of their spiritual tour Nityananda, along with Haridasa, had to undergo untold persecutions at the hands of atheists for their all-embracing and cosmopolitan outlook.

With his entire entourage Caitanya held constant chanting of the holy name of Srikrishna (*namayajna*) every night at the house of Srivasa. No extraneous element was

allowed to enter the compound of Srivasa while the chanting was on. Even his mother-in-law who had kept herself hidden in a corner was turned out by Srivasa for her anti-devotional attitude. Men of malicious disposition, finding the door shut before them, cast aspersions against the immaculate character of Caitanya's devotees, to which the latter paid no heed at all. Thus refused to enter into the fold of congregational chant, a foul-mouthed brahmin tore asunder his sacred thread in a fit of rage and cursed Caitanya saying that the latter's mundane merriment would be at an end. With great pleasure and forbearance the Lord accepted the anathema.

In these days Caitanya along with his followers was deeply sunken in the ocean of ecstatic dancing and chanting the holy name of Krishna. During such a trance, one night, the only son of Srivasa died all of a sudden. The members of his family, although overwhelmed with grief, were prevented from raising cry of grief lest Caitanya's ecstasy might be disturbed. Srivasa's love for Caitanya was fully manifested in his perfect self-control and strict forbearance at the premature death of his only son. Caitanya apprised of this mishap late at night, went to the place of occurrence with his associates and had the mystery of this sudden death, unravalled from the lips of the departed soul. Upon this, the members of Srivasa's family were relieved of their sorrow.

In the mission of their preaching the tenets of love divine Nityananda and Haridasa had a bitter experience. They encountered, in the course of their preaching the religion, Jagai and Madhai, who had left no sins uncommitted except grave offences against the Vaisnavas. Indignant at the sound of the holy name of Srihari, they assaulted the two innocent missionaries of love divine with missiles which made the forehead of Nityananda bleed profusely. The matter was at once reported to Caitanya who instantly come to the spot quite enraged, to punish the miscreants. Nityananda interceded with him for pardoning the culprits, and ultimately, his causeless unbounded mercy captured their devilish hearts and turned them into faithful devotees of Caitanya. Iron was thus transmuted into pure gold by the miraculous touch of the philosopher's stone. This legendary transformation of Jagai and Madhai, made at the cost of Nityananda's bloodshed won

for the Lord and his company wide acclaim.

Advaitacarya was sorrowful at heart to be deprived of Caitanya's blessings and devised a plan to obtain his compassionate grace. With this desire in view, he retired to his native place Santipur where he began to expound the illusory theory of Sankaracarya to his disciples. Coming to know of this, Caitanya hastened there and in a fit of rage began to beat him, saying, "What makes you, Acarya, establish the superiority of dry gnosticism (*jnana*) over pure loving devotion to the Supreme person, Srikrishna (*bhakti*)? Is this the reason why you have invoked me from my Supreme Realm of Vrindavana, and thus put me out of countenance? Advaita's desire was thus fulfilled and his heart leaped up with joy as he received the loving chastisement from Sricaitanya. By the above incident he teaches us that he has appeared to establish the religion of love divine all over the world. He did not even spare Advaitacarya whom he loved so much (not to speak of others) when the Acarya was found to preach against his doctrine and thereby mislead the people from the path of pure devotion. Thus the Lord emerged as the most powerful preacher of divine love.

In the meantime Pundarika Vidyanidhi of Chittagong, a dedicated devotee of Srikrishna came to visit Mayapura. The advent of Pundarika was previously declared by the Lord in a fit of trance to his devotees. However, Vidyanidhi was a devotee of the highest order, but his mysterious loving nature was hardly recognisable from his external gorgeous habiliments. Very often the highly-devoted spiritual persons screen themselves from public views by their apparent appearances and deluding actions. Mukunda, who knew Vidyanidhi beforehand went to see him accompanied by Gadadhara, his most intimate friend. Gadadhara a life-long celibate wholly detached from mundane pursuits, displayed the role of mistaking Pundarika Vidyanidhi for a man of the world, thereby committing an offence at his feet. To deliver him from this grave offence, Mukunda cited a verse from the *Srimadbhagavata* to show how deep the love of Vidyanidhi was for Srikrishna. Hearing the verse, Vidyanidhi was so much transported with rapturous ecstasy that he fell into a trance, and symptoms of divine emotions began to manifest

themselves in his body. To make amends for his offence against Vidyanidhi, Gadadhara made up his mind to be initiated by him, and informed Caitanya of his pious intention to which he gladly gave his assent. Pundarika Vidyanidhi was afterwards given the title of *Premanidhi* (repository of love) by Caitanya as a token of his fathomless love for Srikrishna.

One night Caitanya staged an unprecedented wonderful dramatic performance known as the divine deed of gift (*danalila*) at the house of Candrasekharacarya, an elderly devotee of the Lord. The dramatis personae were Sri Advaitacarya, Nityananda, Srivasa, Haridasa, Gadadhara, etc. each of whom played his respective role on the stage extempore, under the divine inspiration of Caitanya, who played the role of Rukmini, the consort of Krishna at Dvaraka. This was most probably the first dramatic performance in the Bengali language and literature.

Devananda, living at Kulia (one of the nine islands of Navadvipa), had a *pathasala* where he used to read the *Bhagavata* every day before a large audience. One day, Srivasa went there to listen to Devananda's discourse on the sacred book. On hearing Krishna's divine sports (*krishnalila*) Srivasa was so much intoxicated with love divine that he could not restrain himself and began to weep out of love-in-separation for Krishna. Devananda who could ill brook what he regarded as unpleasant disturbance disparaged him through his pupils who turned him out of the compound. On another occasion, while Devananda was reading the *Bhagavata*, Caitanya happened to pass by. Caitanya at once flew into a rage and said, "What right has this fellow to read the *Bhagavata*, and thus delude the audience with false and far-fetched interpretations? He does not know that it is the divine book, far beyond the ken of human understanding. It is only understandable by a devotee who renders sincere service and submissively listens to the genuine preceptor who alone can enlighten him with the esoteric meaning. It is a matter of great regret that Devananda not only lacks the above qualities, but also committed a very grave offence at the feet of Srivasa by traducing him the other day." With this, Caitanya gave him a severe reproof which brought Devananda to compunc-

tion and he fell down at the lotus-feet of Caitanya and begged to be forgiven. Caitanya advised him to ask pardon of Srivasa and he did so accordingly. Since then, Kulia has been designated as the place where the offence against a Vaisnava was pardoned (*aparadhabhanjaner pat*).

From this time onward till renunciation, Caitanya preached his doctrine of chanting of holy name in important towns and villages through his disciples with the result that thousands of people joined his banner and were re-established in the natural function of their unalloyed souls.

This overwhelming success of his doctrine as well as the magic of his spotless name and fame had their repercussions throughout the length and breadth of the country and quite naturally stirred up the malicious disposition of some pundits of Navadvipa belonging to the anti-devotional school who lodged a complaint against him to Cand Kazi (Maulana Sirajuddin), the then governor of the city. The Kazi perpetrated not only a great violence upon the Vaisnavas but also profaned the holy propaganda of chanting of holy name by smashing into pieces the earthen drums called *mrdanga* of the *samkirtana* party, from which the place where the incident occurred is still known as "the spot where the earthen drums were broken" (*kholbhangar danga*), some two hundred metres to the north of the Yogapitha, the birth site of Caitanya. Thereupon, in the evening, Caitanya took out a huge procession of *samkirtana* party consisting of three groups under the lead of Haridasa, Advaitacarya and Caitanya himself with Nityananda respectively. The procession took the route along the Ganges and passed through the villages Ganganagar, Barokonaghat and Simulia till it reached the house of the Kazi. Frightened by the huge demonstration and the loud chant of the holy name which rent the sky, the Kazi concealed himself inside his house. Caitanya sent for the Kazi, accusing him of inhospitality. The Kazi came out and met Caitanya who gave him all assurance of safety. Thus assured the Kazi had a long conversation with him about some topics of vital importance. Caitanya enquired as to what made him refrain from carrying out his anti-theistic propaganda to which the Kazi made no secret of the punishment he received in his sleep in the shape of nail-scratches on his breast at the

hands of a grim lion-faced human figure (Narasimhadeva) grinding his teeth and reprimanding him for sacrilegious act on the very night of the day he broke into pieces *mrdangas* of the *samkirtana* party. He also added that some of his peons had the name of Krishna, Rama and Hari always coming from their lips as if by spell. The holy names of Krishna uttered thrice in this vein purified and melted the heart of the Kazi who implored Caitanya for his mercy and promised him to abstain from all further desecrations of his divine religion. Moved by the truth, beauty and harmony of the doctrine of Caitanya, the Kazi gladly joined his banner. The Kazi and his descendants became staunch followers of Caitanya for many generations. The tomb of the Kazi is still visible near Mayapura and is frequently visited by pilgrims as a sacred shrine. The conversion of Cand Kazi not only created a thrilling sensation all over Navadvipa but also attracted thousands of disbelievers who flocked to Caitanya's banner of *namasamkirtana*.

Converting the Kazi, Caitanya along with his *samkirtana* party passed through the quarters of the conch-sellers and the weavers of Navadvipa, at last arriving at the house of Sridhara the banana-sheath-seller and quaffed with great relish, a quantity of water from a worn-out patched-up iron pot, at which poor Sridhara bemoaned his sad lot, saying, "I am undone". But Caitanya showered his choicest blessings upon Sridhara with the remark that devotion of Visnu (*visnubhakti*) accrues from drinking water left by a Vaisnava. This sufficiently proves Caitanya's all-embracing nature and profound diplomatic policy by the aid of which he won for his self-devised religion the deep devotion of the rank and file of the country to a small extent and also for the overall welfare of the country to a larger extent.

Finding that the object of his advent (his incarnation) was going to be counteracted by the ungodly conduct and character of the scoffers and pedantic wrangles of Navadvipa, Caitanya made up his mind to renounce the world. He intimated his intention to Nityananda, Gadadhara and Haridasa saying that his robe of a recluse would soften their hardened hearts and bring eternal good by inclining them to listen, with due submission and respect to his sermons. The

news of his renunciation spread like wild fire in the city. In vain did he try to console his mother Saci Devi, his loving consort Visnupriya Devi and his beloved followers Nityananda, Gadadhara, Haridasa, Srivasa, Mukunda and others. One wintry morning, they actually found that the heart of their hearts had left them—the servile mother and her devoted daughter-in-law bewailing the unbearable separation of Caitanya from them. This incident melted and purified the adamantine hearts of the disbelievers who followed Caitanya to beg his pardon for the offences committed against him and his devotees.

This marks the historic transition of his life. Caitanya swam across the Ganges to Katwa, a place forty kilometres west of Nabadvipa, and accepted renunciation (*sannyasa*) from Kesava Bharati, a monk of the Bharati order, and assumed the transcendental name of 'Srikrishnacaitanya' (he who awakens the consciousness of Srikrishna in the hearts of all). The function over, he set out on his pilgrimage to Vrindavana in quest of his beloved Krishna with these words on his lips.

'I, too, shall cross the terrible and dark ocean of the world by serving the lotus-feet of Mukunda, the Supreme Lord, as did the sages of yore'.

For three days and nights he roamed in a state of trance in search of his beloved Krishna in the land of Radha (modern Vardhamana) without food and rest and was at last induced by Nityananda to visit the house of Advaitacarya in Santipur where the Lord stayed for ten days, deeply absorbed in the ecstatic joy, arising from the chanting of the holy name. His mother and his followers of Navadvipa, who were at the point of starving themselves to death at his separation, were quickened into life, when they once more found an opportunity of looking at the matchless beauty of his enchantingly divine face. It does not behove a *sannyasin* to pass his days in the midst of his former kith and kin. So Saci Devi desired that her son Nimai might stay at Puri in Orissa where his beloved followers of Navadvipa might have opportunity to meet him during the *Ratha yatra* (car-festival) of Lord Jagannatha.

Hearing this, the joy of the devotees knew no bounds, but

the decree of providence was inexplorable. The appointed day of separation came again. Caitanya left Santipur for Puri with Nityananda, Jagadananda, Mukunda, Gadadhara and Brahmananda. Travelling through Atisara, Chatrabhoga and Jalesvara Caitanya visited Gopinatha at Remuna near Balesvara. The servitors of Gopinatha were wonder-struck to see his outpourings of love and served him with the preparation of milk and sugar (*ksiraprasada*). Caitanya spent the night in singing and started for Cuttack next morning, after witnessing the auspicious light-waving (*mangalarati*) of Gopinatha. Caitanya arrived at Cuttack via Jajpur and saw Saksigopala whose matchless beauty threw him into raptures and he began his ecstatic dancing and song which astonished the senitors of Gopala. From Cuttack, he with his followers, passing through Bhuvanesvara and Atharanala reached Puri. On entering the lofty temple of Srijagannatha Deva, as he ran to embrace the deity, his beloved Krishna, he fell into a swoon out of ecstasy for union after a long separation and was carried in the state of trance by Vasudeva Sarvabhauma who was fortunately present on the spot, to his house. Meanwhile, an incident on the journey had made his associates lag behind. Nityananda had broken the single monk-staff of Caitanya into three pieces and cast them into a river that accordingly received the name of Dandabhanga. Caitanya, feigning to be annoyed at his incident and separating himself from the company of Nityananda and other devotees, had reached Puri in advance. On their subsequent arrival at Puri, the devotees met Gopinathacarya, a devotee of Caitanya and brother-in-law of Vasudeva Sarvabhauma. Learning from him that Caitanya was at the latter's house, they hastened there and found him lying unconscious on the floor. They chanted the name of Krishna in his ears which brought him to consciousness in the afternoon, after a trance lasting for three quarters of the day.

Vasudeva Sarvabhauma was the foremost logician of India at that time and the most erudite scholar of the monistic school of Sankaracarya. In appreciation of his great scholarship he was made the court pundit of Prataparudra, the powerful independent king of Orissa. Gopinathacarya tried to impress upon Sarvabhauma faith in the divinity of

Sricaitanya. But the latter, owing to his empiric bend of mind, could not recognise him as such. Mistaking him for an ordinary monk and a youthful novice, the great savant expounded to him the aphorisms of the *brahmasutras* for a week on the lines of the commentaries of the impersonalist school of Sankara. Caitanya remained taciturn all the while, as the interpretations of Sarvabhauma went wide off the mark. When Sarvabhauma noticed the indifference of Caitanya, he enquired the reasons thereof. Whereupon Caitanya explained those aphorisms strictly on the foundation of pure theism: Overawed and attracted by the truth, beauty and harmony of the expositions, Sarvabhauma bowed down his head before him and composed then and there, exquisite hymns in eulogy of Caitanya. The diverse expositions of him filled the heart of Sarvabhauma with reverential awe and wonder. He sought refuse in Caitanya who showed him his divine forms, first as four-armed Visnu and then as Krishna playing on the flute. This six-armed form of the Lord is still visible in the temple of Lord Jagannatha at Puri. At this vision, Sarvabhauma fell prostrate at the lotus-feet of Caitanya and became his staunch disciple. Some however, doubt about Vasudeva Sarvabhauma's accepting the Vaisnava theology. In the orthodox accounts, however, it appears that the great Vedantist was not fully convinced by the metaphysics of the young enthusiast, but that he was finally overpowered when Caitanya revealed himself to his vision as the divine Krishna. Apart from miracles, what probably happened was that Sarvabhauma was finally won over from the path of dry doctrines to that of passionate devotion, not so much by theological arguments as by the irresistible appeal of Caitanya's impassioned religious personality.

The conversion of Sarvabhauma was a great triumph for Caitanya and his company. It brought the whole of Orissa to the lotus-feet of Caitanya. Due to his non-devotional attitude Sarvabhauma could not recognise Ray Ramananda, a great devotee of the Supreme Lord Srikrishna and the then Governor of Vidyanagara at the first sight. Therefore, when Caitanya was about to start on his way to redeem the people of the south he supplicated Caitanya to meet Ray Ramananda

there.

In southern India, the dearth of pure theism was hardly less than that in the North, due to narrow sectarianism and rigid caste rules. To liberate the people of the South from these suicidal prejudices and superstitions, Caitanya proceeded with one Krishnadasa on his journey to the South. He visited Alvarnath at Brahmagiri, Kurmadeva at Kurmacalam near Chicacole in Ganjam district, where he gave deliverance to a brahmin named Kurma and a brahmin leper named Vasudeva. He saw Nrsimhadeva at Simhacalam in Vishakhapattanam district. He met Ray Ramananda on the bank of the Godavari and had a long philosophical discourse with him on the summum bonum of human existence and the means of attaining the same.

This celebrated discourse—the self-luminous guiding star in the firmament of Vaisnava philosophy has been eternally shining in the *Caitanyacaritamrta* (madhya, chapter, VIII). In this famous dialogue, which is reproduced below, Caitanya acts the part of the inquirer and Ray Ramananda, the replier :

Q. 1. What knowledge is the highest of all ?

Ans. There is no true knowledge except devotion to Krishna.

Q. 2. What is the highest glory of a being (*jiva*) ?

Ans. To be reputed to be the devotee of Krishna.

Q. 3. What is counted wealth among human possessions ?

Ans. He is immensely wealthy who has love for Sriradhakrishna.

Q. 4. What is the heaviest of all sorrows ?

Ans. There is no sorrow greater than that of separation from the devotee of Krishna.

Q. 5. Who should be considered truly liberated ?

Ans. He is the foremost of the liberated who loves Krishna heartily.

Q. 6. What song among all souls in the natural function of a *jiva* soul ?

Ans. That song which speaks of the transcendental amorous sports of Sriradha and Krishna is the eternal function of a *jiva* soul.

Q. 7. What is the highest good of all *jiva* souls ?

Ans. There is nothing higher than the society of the devotees of Krishna.

Q. 8. What should all persons ceaselessly remember ?

Ans. The chief things to be remembered are the names, forms, attributes, associates and amorous sports of Srikrishna.

Q. 9. Among objects of meditation what should everyone meditate upon ?

Ans. The supreme meditation is on the lotus-feet of Sriradhakrishna.

Q. 10. Where should one reside, leaving all behind ?

Ans. In the glorious land of Vrindavana where the transcendental *rasalila* is eternally enacted.

Q. 11. What is the best of things to be constantly listened to ?

Ans. The love-dalliances of Sriradhakrishna are the greatest delight to the ears of a *jiva*.

Q. 12. What is the highest object of worship ?

Ans. The highest object of worship is the holy name of the most adorable divine couple Sriradhakrishna.

Q. 13. What are the respective destinations of those who hanker after liberation and enjoyment ?

Ans. The liberationists obtain the bodies of inert beings such as stones, and the elevationists dwell in the domain of god in their celestial bodies.

Thus he spent ten days happily in sweet discourse about Krishna with Ray Ramananda. He showed him his real form in which were blended into one Krishna, the prince of *Rasa* and *Radha*, the Supreme emotion.

Then Caitanya went on to Mangalagiri in Guntur, Ahobilam in Karnool and Tirupati in Chittor districts. He then visited all the shrines of the Tamil territory and also Kanjeepuram, Srirangam, Madurai, Siyali, Kumbhakonam and Thanjavur. After that he visited Srijanardana near Varkala, Srianantapadmanabha in Trivandrum, Adikesava at the village Tiruvattar and Kanyakumari at Cape Comorin. Then he went to Payasvini and visited many shrines in South India.

At Rangaksetra (Srirangam near Tiruchirapalli), Caitanya stayed for four months of the rainy season on account of the

caturmasya (a sacred performance continued for four months) at the house of Venkata Bhatta, a Vaisnava householder, belonging to the Ramanuja cult. His discourse on the fundamental principle of the *Srimadbhagavata* converted the whole family of Venkata Bhatta, into the worship of the Supreme Lord Srikrishna. Both Krishna and Narayana are, in essence, one and the same principle, but as regards divine amours of love, the former excels the latter. Venkata's son, Gopala Bhatta was one of the six Gosvamins of hallowed memory of Vrindavana.

Caitanya visited Sringeri (in Mysore), Udupi (in South Canara), Gokarna (in North Canara) and other shrines on the Western coast. During his sojourn in the south, he procured two most precious works of Gaudiya Vaisnavisim, viz. (i) *Brahmasamhita*, from the temple of Adikesava at Tirvattar (Travancore, Kerala) and (ii) *Krishnakarnamrta*, ufrom Krishnavenva.

Wherever Caitanya went, he preached the super-excellence of the name of Srikrishna over all other forms of devotion, and converted the Buddhists, the Jains, the exclusive monists (*mayavadins*) and the elevationists (*smartas*) to the path of unalloyed loving devotion (*bhakti*) to the Supreme Lord Srikrishna.

On his return to Puri via Vidyaranya and Alvarnatha, after a lapse of two years, Caitanya met Nityananda, Jagadananda, Mukunda and Vasudeva Sarvabhauma of whom he spoke highly. Sarvabhauma then arranged Kasi Mishra's house for Caitanya's residence and introduced the devotees of Orissa to him, among whom were Kasi Mishra, Ray Ramananda, Paramanandapuri, Govinda (a disciple of Isvarapuri), and Brahmananda Bharati who was made to cast off his skin robe and don ochre cloth, came to Puri to meet Caitanya.

Purusottama Bhattacharya, an intimate comrade of the Lord at Navadvipa, unable to bear the sight of Caitanya's *Sannyasa*, renounced the world and assumed the designation of Sridamodara Svarupa from his preceptor, Caitanyananda at Varanasi. He was an erudite scholar in the *vedanta* and perfectly dispassionate. His love for Krishna was so great that he was called the alter ego of Caitanya. He was a

second Brhaspati in sastric lore and a veritable *gandharva* in music. He used to delight Caitanya with the divine love-songs of Candidasa and Vidyapati and Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*. The Lord was very pleased and asked him to be his constant companion in the realisation of love divine at Kasi Mishra's house (*gambhira*).

King Prataparudra Gajapati of Orissa showed his ardent desire to meet Caitanya. But the latter refused to grant the king an interview on the ground that it does not behove a dispassionate *sannyasin* to behold a king or a woman, as such conduct is more fatal than swallowing venom. Nevertheless the king used to perform devoutly his humble duty of sweeping off the dust of the car-road of Lord Jagannatha. He was determined to put an end to his life should he be deprived of the blessings of Caitanya who has appeared to redeem the world. At last, through the kind intercession of Nityananda, Ray Ramananda and Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, the king humbly approached Caitanya who gave him a warm embrace and blessed him with his grace. Thus Prataparudra Gajapati became a staunch follower of Caitanya with all his family.

A large number of devotees of Bengal met Caitanya at Puri. He eulogised their exclusive devotion. Among them was Haridasa, the humility incarnate who was given by Caitanya a solitary nook near his own garden, known as *siddhavakula,* for his chanting of names (*namabhajana*). Caitanya used to meet him there everyday.

Caitanya was glad to embrace Vasudeva Datta, one of his most favourite disciples, who prayed for the wholesale redemption of all the fallen souls who have been deprived of transcendental bliss, by taking upon himself the sins and offences committed by them in various births and their eternal damnation due therefore. But Caitanya granted his prayer with impurity for himself. By this Vasudeva Datta excelled all other altruists and philanthropists of the world in his universal sympathy for the redemption of the world-evils.

The car-festival of Lord Jagannatha was drawing near. The *gundicamandira* is located in Sundaracala, four kilometres east of Nilacala and is the destination of the travel of Lord Jagannatha by car. A nine-day festival takes place

every year during his stay there. Caitanya used to perform the cleansing ceremony of the temple every year with all his followers, on the eve of the car-festival. He has also taught the underlying principle of this cleansing ceremony. *Gundicamandira* represents the heart of a devotee. If he desires to enthrone Krishna in his heart, he should first of all, purify it from all foreign dirts under the benign guidance of Caitanya. For four months after the car-festival, the devotees were immersed in the ocean of ecstasy in the sweet company of Caitanya. One day, he requested Nityananda and Advaitacarya to start for Bengal and bestow divine love upon one and all irrespective of caste, creed, colour and community. He also sent some *mahaprasada* and consecrated articles with Srivasa for his mother.

He started for Bengal on the *vijayadasami* day en route to Vrindavana went upto Ramakeli in the district of Maldah via Panihati, Kumarahatta and Barahanagar. He redeemed the two brothers Davir Khas and Sakar Mallik, ministers of Hussain Shah, the then Muslim King of Bengal, who have since been known as Srirupa and Srisanatana respectively. He instructed them to proceed to Vrindavana for reclaiming the then extinct shrines and the sites of the revels of Srikrishna, the lord of love. He then retraced his steps to Santipur via Kanainatshala as suggested by Srisanatana. He gave up his idea of proceeding to Vrindavana with a large retinue. Instructing Raghunatha Dasa to observe genuine asceticism (*yuktavairagya*) Caitanya returned to Puri.

He then set out for Vrindavana through the forest route of Jharikhanda (Chotanagpur) with a simple-minded brahmin named Balabhadra Bhattacharya. Throughout the journey across the dense forest he incessantly chanted the name of Krishna. The denizens of the forests, seeing his charming figure and hearing him chanting the name, forgot their animal nature and followed him with a yearning of deep affection, so much so as to make a tiger kiss a deer under the influence of divine love. In this manner, Caitanya reached Varanasi and put up at the house of Tapana Mishra for a few days. Thence he went to Mathura where he accepted food cooked and offered to Visnu by Krishna Dasa, a Sanodia brahmin and a disciple of Madhavendrapuri.

Caitanya circumambulated the twelve groves of Mathura and Vrindavana, deeply saturated with love-in-separation for Krishna. He removed the hallucination from the mind of Balabhadra Bhattacharya when one night he had mistaken a fisherman on the river Yamuna for Krishna, his boat for the Kaliya-serpent and his lamp for the crest jewel of its hood. He then left Mathura and returned to Varanasi via Prayaga.

On the way Caitanya instilled love of Krishna into a Pathan prince named Viyali Khan and his followers who were afterwards known as the Pathan Vaisnavas.

Then he met Srirupa Gosvamin and his younger brother Vallabha (Anupama). They eulogised him with all humbleness. Afterwards Vallabha Bhatta, founder of the *pusti-marga* school of Vaisnavism, met Sricaitanya who introduced Srirupa and Anupama to him. Vallabha Bhatta wondered as he perceived his fervour, devotion, power, faith and beauty. He took him and his followers in a boat to his own house at Adail, a village on the opposite side of the Allahabad fort. Beholding the sparkling blue water of the Yamuna, Caitanya leapt into the river. They were all seized with panic and hurriedly pulled him out of the water. The anxious Bhatta brought him home, gave him a fine g rment, washed his feet and honoured the feet-wash with his family. Caitanya dined at his house and the holy remnant of his dinner (*mahaprasada*) was given to Srirupa, Anupama and Krishna Dasa.

Afterwards Vallabha Bhatta carried him across the river *Yamuna* in a boat and landed him at Prayaga. Avoiding the rush of the people, Caitanya taught Srirupa Krishna's essence, the path of pure devotion, the love of divine emotions and the sublime conclusions of the *Bhagavata*. He infused his own powers into Srirupa's heart in order to make him a perfect Doctor of Vaisnava theology.

Then directing Srirupa to start for Vrindavana and meet him at Bengal and Puri, Caitanya himself went to Varanasi and stayed at the house of Candrasekhara and dined at the house of Tapana Mishra on his special request. Meanwhile Sanatana Gosvamin, having made good his escape from the prison at Gauda, the then capital of Bengal, hastened to Varanasi to meet Caitanya, on receipt of Srirupa's letter.

On arrival at Varanasi in the garb of a Muslim Faqir, he could not be recognised by Candrasekhara until made known to the latter by Caitanya who welcomed Srisanatana with a loving embrace. He introduced Srisanatana to Tapana Mishra and Candrasekhara. He asked Srisanatana to share himself and Candrasekhara to give him a new pair of garments which Srisanatana refused to accept. Caitanya was pleased with his dispassion but cast a glance at his costly blanket, whereupon, Srisanatana exchanged it for the tattered quilt of a Bengali mendicant. Srisanatana humbly uttered, "As thou hast graciously saved me, tell me, O Lord, what my duties are. Who am I ? Why is the threefold affliction tormenting me? I know not what will do me eternal good. His Lord replied, "O Sanatana, full is Krishna's grace upon thee. Thou knowest all the truths and art not subject to the threefold affliction. Thou, indeed art the proper agent for preaching the doctrine of devotion". Then Caitanya taught Srisanatana all the inner truths of the Vaisnava philosophy, which is known as *Srisanatanasiksa*.

One day, during his stay at Varanasi, Caitanya accepted the invitation of a Maharastri brahmin in his house where he met Prakasananda Sarasvati, one of the greatest exponents of the monistic school of *vedanta*. The beautiful and smiling face of Caitanya, his serene and divine look, the stalwart and symmetrical contour of his body, the sparkling intelligence beaming from all about his personality and above all, the sweet and constant soul-enchanting names of Krishna, coming out of his holy lips attracted the attention of all assembled there. In reply to the query of Prakasananda as to why he had neglected the study of the *vedanta*—the duty of a *sannyasin*, he said that he had neither the capacity nor intelligence to pursue and realise the same by the limited empiric knowledge. Assured by the method of revelation, he had sought the shelter at the lotus-feet of his divine master, who, out of his causeless infinite compassionate grace, had initiated him with the holy name and spiritual formula of invocation (*mantra*) of Krishna. Then the incessant chanting of the holy name not only convinced him as to the relation of identity of the name, form, attributes, entourage and beautific sports of Krishna with Krishna himself, but also fully intoxicated him

with love divine. Compared to the ocean of love of Krishna, not only the fourfold objects of human pursuits sought by the elevationists and salvationists are as worthless as straw, but also the bliss of realised oneness of monism (brahmananda) is but a drop.

Thus the simple and comprehensive expositions of the aphorisms of the *vedanta* from the angle of vision of doctrine of *acintyabhedabheda*, given by Caitanya made an indelible impression on the minds of his audience who distinctly understood the ulterior motive of the monistic commentary of the *sankaravedanta* school. They welcomed the cult of pure *bhakti* the eternal function of the *jiva* soul and joined the congregational chanting of the holy name of Krishna promulgated by Caitanya. This is known by the name the emancipation of Prakasananda. With the conversion of Prakasananda, the whole of Varanasi school embraced the cult of the *Srimadbhagavata* of the *Naimisaranya* school. Then Caitanya left Varanasi and returned to Puri by the forest route of Jharikhanda. Before that when he came to Santipur after his *sannyasa*, Raghunatha, the only son of Govardhana Majumdar, the rich and influential landlord of Saptagrama, fell prostrate at the lotus-feet of him in a rapture of love when Caitanya touched him with his toe. Since his very childhood Raghunatha was dispassionate. Advaita favoured Raghunatha with the arts of Caitanya's dish. After a week's stay at his feet, Raghunatha was sent home on the eve of his departure for Puri. Maddened with love for Caitanya, Raghunatha repeatedly ran away from his home to go to Puri. But he was well-guarded by his father day and night. Once the golden opportunity came and Raghunatha hastened to Puri. When he reached Puri after a toilsome journey of twelve days Caitanya gave him loving embrace. He delivered Raghunatha to Sridamodara Svarupa. Since then he was known as Svarupa's Raghu. Raghunatha lived a life of severe austerities. Raghunatha Dasa was one of the six Gosvamins of hallowed memory of Vrinda ana. In the last days of his worship, he even gave up food and water and used to live upon two or three ounces of buttermilk a day.

In the meantime Srisanatana as directed by Caitanya, arrived at Puri. The news of the passing away of his youngest

brother Vallabha (Anupama) saddened Srisanatana greatly. He resolved to end his life. Caitanya made Sanatana refrain from committing such an act which, according to him, was at once infernal and unrighteous and withal a set-back to the attainment of love of Krishna (*krishnaprema*) which accrues only from devotional culture.

Caitanya sent Srisanatana to Vrindavana at the end of a year, where he met Srirupa who had already arrived there.

There was none so devoted to Caitanya as Haridasa. Haridasa had pledged that he must complete three lakhs of muttering the holy names (*japas*) daily and till that was completed he would not eat anything. This he faithfully followed. All other devotees considered Haridasa as the incarnate of *nama brahma*. At Puri, Haridasa's thatched hut was situated near the *siddhavakula* tree. Only once he would come out of his hut to have a glimpse of Lord Jagannatha's temple. Haridasa was the humblest of the humblest and was the reflex prototype of the mantra 'humbler than the humble grass itself' (*trnadapisunicena*). None could match Haridasa in humility and politeness.

Caitanya took his bath daily in the sea of Puri. On the way he always dropped at Haridasa's hut to hear the soft, melodious and constant chanting of the name of Hari (*harinama*) by Haridasa.

One day Caitanya came to Haridasa and found him lying on bed, chanting the holy name very slowly and asked what ailed him. On being asked Haridasa replied, "I am physically fit but am not so well in mind, since my chanting falls far short of the promised number to be counted." Caitanya said, "Thou art a blessed devotee of Krishna, perfect in thy worship." Haridasa then expressed his heartfelt desire that clasping the lotus-feet of Caitanya in his bosom, beholding his moon-like face with his eyes and with the holy name of Srikrishnacaitanya in his tongue, he might breathe his last. His prayer has been readily granted. Next morning, Caitanya appeared before Haridasa with all his followers and began to perform a grand *samkirtana* encircling Haridasa. Haridasa then gazed at the lotus-face of Caitanya, riveted the two bees of his eyes to his countenance, clasped the lotus-feet of him in his bosom, adorned his head with the

feet-dust of Caitanya's devotees, recited the holy name of Srikrishnacaitanya, drank the nectarine sweetness of his lotus-face, with tears in his eyes and the holy name of Caitanya on his lips, departed from this world, as did Vasudeva of yore. Loud chant of the names of Hari, Krishna and Rama sent a thrill of joy to Caitanya who began to dance in rapturous ecstasy with the holy body of Haridasa in his lap. Haridasa's body was bathed in the sea when Caitanya said, "From this day onward, the sea becomes a great sacred shrine." He performed the funeral ceremony of Haridasa with his followers amidst loud chant of the holy name and entombed his body with sand with his own hands. A huge quantity of *mahaprasada* was brought instantly and the disappearance ceremony was performed with great eclat.

Caitanya, in the later phase of his career, considered himself as Sriradha and felt the love-in-separation from Krishna just as Sriradha did after Krishna had left Vrindavana for Mathura. The eight-fold symptoms of transcendental ecstasy overwhelmed Sricaitanya day and night, never giving him rest for a while. At this time Ray Ramanand and Svarupa Damodara consoled him, the former by reciting verses from Candidasa, Vidyapati, *Krishnakarnamrta* and *Gitagovinda* and the latter by singing songs on devotional sports of Krishna from *Jagannathavallabha* (a drama written by the former).

It was the wont of Caitanya to wake all night chanting aloud Krishna's name. Noticing the silence within, Sridamodara Svarupa pushed the door open and found the other three doors closed from within, but Caitanya was not in the room. He found him lying on an open space, a little off the Lion's gate. His body became five or six cubits long. He was unconscious and his breathing had ceased. He was foaming at the mouth and his eyes were fixed in a deadly stare. Then Svarupa with his party, loudly chanted the name of Krishna into his ears which brought him back to his consciousness, and he rose up shouting 'Hari', 'Hari'. His limbs were rejoined to his body as before.

Caitanya observed the Chatak hillock on his way to the sea at Puri. One day he was engrossed with the feeling that this hill was the *Girigovardhana* at the sight of it from far off. He immediately ran towards it, chanting a verse of *Srimad-*

bhagavata where the glories of Govardhana hill have been sung. Govinda, an associate of him, ran hurriedly after him, but was unable to catch up with him who was running very fast. Suddenly a feeling of petrification overcame Caitanya. He could not move at all and fell down. He was seized with unseen and unheard of feelings which enlarged every pore of his skin each of which took the shape of a large ball. His whole body was covered with goose-bumps. From each and every pore of the skin, blood oozed out like perspiration. Gurgling sounds came out of his throat. No words or speech came out of his mouth. From his eyes tears like torrents of rain-water flowed down his cheeks. The entire body became so pale that it looked as white as a bleached conch-shell. His body was trembling like a banana tree violently whipped by lashing winds.

Finding these symptoms in the body of Caitanya Govinda was quite perplexed. Like a mad man he drenched him with the water from a pot of water which was with him and fanned him furiously with his garment. The news of it by that time spread rapidly. Svarupa Damodara, Gadadhara, Jagadananda and all came running to the sea beach. All the eight *sattvika* signs came out distinctly on the holy body of the Lord. The devotees started crying on finding their Lord in such a state. The *samkirtana* went on for a long time. Caitanya was still lying on the sea-shore. Suddenly he shouted out the name Hari and sat up.

Relieved to see him back again to his normal self the devotees shouted the name of Hari in joy. He then said to Svarupa who had brought him back there from the Govardhana hill "I saw the wonderful sweet devotional sports of Krishna, but again lost him. I was at the Govardhana hill. Around it all the cows were grazing. Krishna played on His flute. Hearing the flute, Sriradha came running. Oh! How beautiful she looked! What ecstatic and divine feelings were flowing out of her, that I fail to describe. Srikrishna entered a cave with Sriradha. All the female friends and attendants went to pluck flowers. Precisely at that moment you all brought me back here. Even being fortunate to see the sweet devotional sports of Krishna (*krishnalila*) I could not see any further. I lost the joy that was given to me. Oh!

Into what deep sorrow I am now plunged." All the devotees remained silent and had nothing to say to him even to console him.

One day the devotees found him lying amidst the *telengi* cows near the Lion's gate like a tortoise. Though outwardly he was unconscious like a pumpkin gourd, inwardly he was enraptured and fully saturated with love of Krishna. When aroused out of that trance he scolded Svarupa for bringing him back to his normal self. He exclaimed with utter despondency that he could no longer hear the sweet heavenly voice of Krishna's flute. This complete contraction of one's body can only happen in the twelfth state (*dvadasadasa*) of divine mood (*mahabhava*).

One night, Caitanya suddenly caught sight of the sea from *Ai-tota*. The moon-light silvered the hearing waves which sparkled like the waters of the *Yamuna*. This spectacle threw him into a rapture of love and taking the ocean for *Yamuna*, he rushed towards the ocean unseen by others and leaped into it. He swooned and knew not what he was doing. The billows sometimes sank him, sometimes floated him. He was carried away like a dry piece of wood. Thus unconscious, he drifted towards Konaraka, now under water, now above it, all the while dreaming of Krishna's love-dalliances with the damsels of *Braja* in the *Yamuna*. Meanwhile Damodara Svarupa and others were startled when they missed him. They undertook a vigorous search for him in every nook and corner of Puri. Overwhelmed with sorrow and almost out of their senses, they walked on the sea beach in search of him, in their intense love. Fortunately they came across a fisherman, in whose net Caitanya's body was caught and he had dragged him ashore, mistaking him for a big fish. Guided by the fisherman they beheld him lying on the ground, huge bodied, pale-skinned and coated with sand all over his body. Then they began to chant aloud Krishna's name into his ears which brought him back to his consciousness and he leaped up with a roar.

He said that he saw Krishna having water sports with his friends. Krishna wanted to touch the bosoms of the ladies of the milkman (*gopi*). They prevented Krishna from doing

it. Caitanya said, "Oh! What a divine scene! It appeared that the sea of love (*rasasamudra*) was bubbling forth. Forgetting everything, I saw witnessing this divine sports of Radha-Krishna Gopi, and at that moment you called me. Oh, my misfortune! You deprived me of enjoying this unique *lila* of Vrindavana.

kanha yamuna vrindavana
kanha krishna gopigana
sei sukhbhanga karaila

Jagadananda, whenever he went to Nadia, also used to meet Advaitacarya. That time, in about 1532 or 1533 A.D., when Jagadananda met Advaita at Navadvipa, Acarya for the first time sent an enigmatic verse through Jagadananda to Puri for Caitanya. The verse was full of riddles and read thus:

baulke kahio lok hailo aul
baulke kahio hate na bikay chaul
baulkc kahio kaje nahiko aul
baulke kahio iha kahiache baul.

Sricaitanya listened to this riddle and gave an angelic smile. Suddenly he exclaimed, "That is his command".

Apparently the meaning of the riddle sent by Advaita, is not understood. It seems that Advaita might have prayed to Caitanya to make an end of his eventful career. Svarupa Damodara failing to understand the real significance of the riddle, asked him what really was that riddle's message. He said, "Acarya is the best of the worshippers of God. He is also very conversant with all the rites and rituals of all the scriptures. To worship God, God has to be evoked first. Again after God's worship is over, God's immersion (*visarjana*) has to be given." He added "But exactly what this riddle really means, I too am not able to understand. Only Advaitacarya himself is able to compose such riddles. What this riddle tries to tell I do not understand."

All the devotees were surprised hearing his reply. Svarupa Damodara became disconcerted. From that day the anguish that Caitanya was suffering because of His still being separated from Krishna, intensified manyfold.

Caitanya then plunged into a deeper trance. He raved frantically day and night, identifying himself with Sriradha.

Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda consoled him in his pangs of love-in-separation from Krishna by singing love-songs from Candidasa, Vidyapati, *Jagannathavallabha*, *Gitagovinda* and *Krishnakarnamrta*. But his lamentations continued till midnight when Svarupa alid him to bed in his room. The love for Krishna used to thrill the heart of Caitanya. He awoke and began to chant the name of Krishna. The pangs of separation convulsed his heart and he began to rub his face against the wall. His face, cheeks and nose were all lacerated but in the vehemence of rapturous ecstasy, he was unaware of it. Svarupa, hearing the groaning sound within, lit a lamp and found his face, cheeks, and nose besmeared with blood. In utter grief, Svarupa brought him back to his bed and soothed him in various ways. Caitanya used to reside at *gambhira* till his disappearance.

The Supreme Lord Caitanya appeared in the firmament of the country of Gauda like a full moon. He showered upon all the worlds the nectarine bliss of his ever fresh beautific sports for forty-eight years. Then he veiled his eternal beautiful form from the gaze of the world.

Statements available perplex us about the day on which Caitanya disappeared from this mundane world. He used to go to the temple of Jagannatha everyday. That day too he started for the Puri temple. He left for Kasi Mishra's house and arriving at the temple's inner sanctum looked at the lustrous face of Lord Jagannatha and immediately all the doors leading to the inner sanctum and the main temple room and inside shut themselves of their own. The reason of such a supernatural act is not really known. However, looking at the lotus-face of Lord Jagannatha, Caitanya exhaled deeply and uttered, "Be gracious to me O Lord Jagannatha ! Give me shelter at your lotus-feet." Just saying these words Caitanya embraced Lord Jagannatha deeply and he dissolved into the divine body of Lord Jagannatha. This is the widely circulated episode of Caitanya's disappearance.

To the modern mind, this episode is not totally cogent and credible. The authors who had depicted the life history of Caitanya differ widely on the mode how he ceased to be visible. Most of them only mentioned the disappearance of him without going into details or into the reality of the

incident. Among them, it is only Locana Dasa who has described this act of disappearance (*aprakatalila*) of Caitanya in the last chapter of his book *Caitanyamangala*.

According to Vrindavana Dasa Caitanya dissolved into the divine body of Srijagannatha within the temple of Lord Jagannatha. The exact date and time of his divine dissolution have not been mentioned. The old manuscript of *Caitanyabhagavata* of Vrindavana Dasa contains nothing more than this. But a few years ago one Ambikacharan Brahmachari published a booklet entitled *Caitanyabhagavater Aprakasita Adhyayatraya* (hitherto unpublished three chapters of *Caitanyabhagavatar*). In the concluding chapter of these three newly published chapters, some new information regarding the disapearance of Caitanya are to be found. According to the statement of the fourteenth chapter one day Caitanya became very much engrossed in Krishna separation and caring little for the forbiddance of the priests and worshippers (*panda*) entered into the temple of Jagannatha. The *pandas* hastened to the spot with sticks in their hands. Caitanya then ceased to be visible from there and went into the place of Madanagopala in the disguise of a mendicant. The whereabouts of Caitanya after that is not known to anybody.

Locana Dasa in his *Caitanyamangala* expresses the same view. But according to him, the disappearance of Caitanya had taken place not inside the temple of Jagannatha but in a place just near by (*gundicavati*). It was in the late afternoon of a Sunday in the month of Asadha, A.D. 1534.

Jayananda in his *Caitanyamangala* gives some new informations regarding Caitanya's passing away. The description of Caitanya's disappearance that has been given in the eighth *khanda* of Jayananda's *Caitanyamangala*, is quite free from supernaturality and poetic exaggerations. According to Jayananda, Caitanya was injured by the piece of a brick when he danced in divine ecstasy during the chariot festival held at the month of Asadha. He had to undergo severe pain in his legs, arising out of that injury. Later on, on the *saptami tithi* at about 11 p.m. in the month of Asadha, he died in the temple of Tota Gopinatha. The idea of the miraculous and sudden disappearance of Caitanya is

emphasized by Narahari Chakravarty in his *Bhaktiratnakara* in his statements in connection with the visit of Narottama Thakura to Puri. Mamu Thakura, disciple of Gadadhara and priest of the Gopinatha temple, tells Narottama by way of relating to him how Caitanya ceased to be visible. He entered this Gopinatha temple and disappeared therein not to come out again. Here Gadadhara fell senseless on the ground. Other priests raised, cry. According to *Bhaktiratnakara* Caitanya passed away in Magha (February) A.D. 1534 The other view states his demise to be in Asadha (July) A.D. 1534

Krishnadasa Kaviraja, in his monumental work *Caitanya-caritamrta*, has stated practically nothing about Caitanya's disappearance. According to him, Caitanya, in a trance, in the state of divine ecstasy threw himself into the sea and breathed his last. According to him, Caitanya passed away on 1455 Sakabda at the age of 48. According to the view generally prevalent Caitanya made an end of his worldly existence on Sunday, 31st Asadha, 1455 Sakabda (the day was the seventh day of *suklapuksa*). It is to be noted here that the day of Caitanya's disappearance is polemic.

The bulk of Sricaitanya's life has been spent in Nilacala. Therefore, it is possible that some facts of the concluding days of his gigantic career may be found in some books written by his Oriya devotees. Among the works dealing with the life of Caitanya in Oriya language and literature, mention may be made of the following ones : (i) *Caitanyavilasa* by Madhava, (ii) *Caitanyabhagavata* by Isvara Dasa, (iii) *Jagannathacaritamrita* by Divakara Dasa, (iv) *Gaurakrishnodayakavya* by Govindadeva and (v) *Caitanyacakda* by Vaisnava Dasa. The last of the list gives a sensational fact about Caitanya's disappearance. According to him, the senseless body of Caitanya was found lying behind the pillar with the Garuda emblem (*garuda stambha*) in the courtyard of the temple of Lord Jagannatha at about 11 p.m. after the *candanavijaya* ceremony. It is to be noted here that as soon as the moving Jagannatha (*sacala Jagannatha*, i.e. Caitanya) entered to have a glimpse of the stationary Jagannatha (the *acaladarubrahma*) all the doors of the temple were closed.

The difference of statements regarding the disappearance of Caitanya gives rise to the question of his normal end. It is clear that his dissolution with the body (*vigraha*) of Jagannatha is impossible. In that case the senseless body should have been left. It is neither possible that he had thrown himself into the sea, nor he went elsewhere in the disguise of a mendicant. A modern scholar's assumption on the identity of Aulcand and Caitanya lacks cogency and coherency. According to that scholar Caitanya disappeared from the temple of Jagannatha in the disguise of a mendicant and after an extensive tour in different places at last came to Nadia. He was then known as Aulcand, noted as the preacher of *Kartabhaja* school. The acceptance of this view leads to the conviction that Caitanya lived a life spanning 284 years which seems to be quite impossible. The question of his abnormal death is related to the then history of Orissa. It is known to us that Prataparudra, the noted king of Orissa became a devotee of Caitanya. He was, however, not initiated. In the concluding days of his life Prataparudra took less care in administration and passed the bulk of time and energy in religious discussions with Caitanya whom he thought to be the Krishna incarnate. The king's apathy in royal administration incurred the displeasure of royal officers to greater extent. On the other hand the *pandas* of Lord Jagannatha were jealous because the king showed more reverence and honour to Caitanya than to Lord Jagannatha. They, therefore, resolved to slay Caitanya secretly. Their conspiracy was further strengthened by the assistance of Govindavidyadhara, the commander-in-chief of Prataparudra The inference of Caitanya's being murdered is, therefore, quite historical.

The facts and events following the death of Caitanya, corroborate this view. King Prataparudra went to Cuttack with his family when the news of Caitanya's death broke out. All the associates and devotees of Caitanya immediately left Puri for Vrindavana. *Samkirtana*, the most prominent part of the worship of Krishna, was totally stopped for a period of nearly fifty years, following Caitanya's death. For fifty years after the disappearance of the great teacher the Vaisnava community lay exervated by the great shock. Their

samkirtana music which took the whole country by surprise stopped, and was not heard for nearly half a century in the provinces of Bengal and Orissa.

Followers of Caitanya

(Caitanya Sampradaya Or Parikaras)

It is a well-established yet peculiar fact that most of the religious preachers of the world have themselves not composed scriptures for preaching their tenets. The followers and associates have themselves formulated the philosophy and ordinances of their respective schools. Like Peter and Paul of Christianity, Sanatana and Rupa, etc. have formulated the main tenets of Gaudiya Vaisnavism. In his life time, though Caitanya was eager to preach the love divine (*krishnaprema*), he himself has not founded any philosophical school or sect, yet on some occasions he delivered some useful sermons to his near followers. These helped the associates building the very base of Gaudiya Vaisnavism. The Gosvamins of Vrindavana, particularly Srisanatana, Srirupa and Srijiva, if they had not constituted the very base of Vaisnavism and preached the tenets, this newly-founded religious faith would have remained in a particular zone or in the life-pattern of a few people. The flow of emotionalism and transcendentalism of Caitanya faith, for which it leaves indelible mark on the culture and society of Bengal, would have been totally extinguished along with the passing away of Caitanya himself. Their contribution to Vaisnavism should, therefore, be properly assessed. The followers of Caitanya are divided into two broad sections, namely the followers of Gauda and the

followers of Vrindavana. According to some there is another section belonging to Utkaladesa. It may be mentioned here that long before the emergence of Caitanya there were a few devotees in Bengal who engaged themselves in chanting the holy name of Lord Krishna. Among them mention may be made of Srivasa, Candrasekhara, Jagadisa, Gopinatha, Gangadasa, Pundarika Vidyanidhi and Mukunda.

Among the chief followers of Caitanya, mention may be made of Advaitacarya, Nityananda and Haridasa (his Muslim associate).

Advaitacarya

Like most of the followers of Caitanya, Advaitacarya was also an inhabitant of Srihatta. Advaita was born in Navagrama in the land Parjana of Srihatta in A.D. 1435 nearly half a century before the birth of Caitanya. His father Kuvera Tarkapancanana was renowned as a great scholar. Advaita was known as Kamalaksa (Kamalakara) Bhattacharya in his boyhood. Along with his parents Kamalaksa left Srihatta and came to Santipur to settle there permanently. He studied astrology, the six systems of Indian philosophy and the four Vedas. He won the prestigious title *Vedapancanana* for his unparalleled proficiency in the Vedas. The name Advaitacarya most probably conveys the reminiscence of his early belonging to the monistic school of *vedanta* philosophy. Residing at Santipur, he ran a *pathasala* at Nabadvipa. Visvarupa, Caitanya's elder brother studied at the school of Advaita. Although Advaita subsequently became a devotee of Caitanya, it seems that he had never deviated from his early faith in the theory of emancipation, advocated by *vedanta* philosophy. Some say that he believed in tempering intellectual 'Advaitism' with emotional '*bhakti*'.

Before the advent of Caitanya when Nabadvipa plunged itself into the culture of dry gnosticism, Advaita led the team of Vaisnavas assembled in the house of Srivasa to chant the names of Hari. It is widely believed in Vaisnava circles that the dedicated yearning of Advaita has quickened the emergence of Caitanya. The Gosvamins of Vrindavana have made a strong foundation of Vaisnava faith, preached by

Caitanya, but the devotees of Gauda only took Caitanya as the incarnation of Krishna. The senile Acarya seemed to have engaged Caitanya in emancipating afflicted souls, and in the act of preaching the names of Hari.

Nityananda

Nityananda's contribution to the Vaisnava faith is regarded with reverence. Even today some people know Nitai to be the elder brother of Nimai (This, however, is far from truth). Caitanya himself directed Advaita and Nityananda to preach the chanting of the holy names (*namadharma*) in Bengal. The responsibility, entrusted on him, was shouldered successfully. It is mainly through his effort the Vaisnava faith has found such a wide response and acceptance in Bengal. Most probably his real name was Kuvera. He was born in A.D. 1478 at Ekchaka village in Birbhum district. His father's name was Hadai Pandita or Hado Ozha, and his mother's name was Padmavati.

At the very childhood Nityananda set out for visiting pilgrimages along with a mendicant. During his sojourn he met Madhavendrapuri. At that time he was attracted by devotional culture (*bhaktidharma*). His title *Avadhuta* seems to suggest that he belonged in his early life to Saivism. Perhaps his meeting with Madhavendrapuri aroused his inclination towards the devotional culture. Hearing that Caitanya had appeared at Navadvipa he came there in 1509 A.D. He was about eight years older than Caitanya. Saci Devi, Caitanya's mother, took him to be her eldest son Visvarupa. To the devotees he was known as the incarnation of Balarama. His encounter with Jagai and Madhai, two notorious ruffians of Navadvipa, ultimately led the two to accept Vaisnavism. In fact, Nityananda flooded Bengal with the religion of love (*premadharma*) preached by Caitanya. He introduced the worship of Caitanya's idol for the first time. Nityananda's importance in the history of Vaisnava faith and movement lies in the fact that he preached Caitanya's religion of love, irrespective of caste and creed. The liberalism of Caitanya's faith has been extended to all and sundry purely due to Nityananda's cosmopolitan nature. Nityananda, with

his deep farsight, tried his best to bring about a quite novel outlook in Gaudiya Vaisnavism, the result of which was too impressive and fruitful.

The Six Gosvamins of Vrindavana

Vrindavana is a holy place of pilgrimage to the Hindus. Gaudiya Vaisnavism and its philosophy emerged as a distinguished branch of philosophy owing to the impact of ideals reflected in the books composed by these Gosvamins. Had it been confined only to Gauda and Utkala, it would not have spread itself as a new branch of knowledge dealing with ultimate reality.

The six Gosvamins, as have been mentioned by Krishnadasa Kaviraja, are Srirupa, Srisanatana, Raghunatha Bhatta, Srijiva, Gopala Bhatta and Raghunatha Dasa. Among these Gosvamins Sanatana, Rupa and Jiva are well-known in the Vaisnava circle; the other three engaged themselves in meditation and worship.

Raghunatha Bhatta : Save Krishnadasa Kaviraja's *Caitanya-caritamrta* we find nowhere the mention of Raghunatha Bhatta who himself was an ideal of a modest Vaisnava mendicant. Tapana Mishra, the father of Raghunatha, was the first disciple of Caitanya. Raghunatha was proficient in cooking. Caitanya often pleased to take food cooked by Raghunatha According to Caitanya's advice Raghunatha came to Vrindavana and took lessons of *Bhagavata* from Rupa and Sanatana. He possessed a melodious tone and was quite proficient in music.. It is true that Raghunatha composed nothing but he is remembered with all reverence in the Vaisnava circle for the modest and ideal life that he led.

Raghunatha Dasa : Raghunatha Dasa was the son of Govardhana, the noted landlord of Saptagrama in Hoogly district. He was born and brought up within royal abundance when Sricaitanya stayed at the house of Advaita at Santipur on his way to Ramakeli, the teen-ager Raghunatha met him. Caitanya advised the boy to wait till he became an adult. Although his father put him in strict vigilance the adult Raghunatha fled away and came into contact with Caitanya in Nilacala after a most perilous journey. Caitanya was pleased to have his young devotee and handed him over to

Svarupa Damodara for giving him proper teaching. It is heard that Caitanya, asked by Raghunatha, stated to him eight stanzas on Vaisnava philosophy, widely known as *siksastaka*. He led an ideal life of an all-renouncing mendicant, taking, in the later phase of his life, orts left by others. Raghunatha died after the demise of Rupa and Sanatana.

Raghunatha was not only proficient in Vaisnava philosophy, he possessed a fine command over Sanskrit language. Altogether 29 hymns are found to have been composed by him. Hymns like *Vilapakusumanjali*, *Premaparabhidhastotra*, inter alia, have been composed in the *Stavamala* (the garland of hymns).

Gopala Bhatta: There is difference of views in the Vaisnava circle regarding Gopala Bhatta. We do not find any substantive information about him in the authentic Vaisnava treatises. Although Krishnadasa Kaviraja mentioned him as one of the six Gosvamins and showed him deep respect, he is queerly taciturn about Gopala Bhatta. Though Rupa and Sanatana were most respectable preceptors of Vrindavana, they refused to be preceptors due to their co-existence with the Muslims. Hence, the act of initiation and advise was entrusted with this modest Gosvamin. Yet very little has been said about him in the authentic Vaisnava treatises. Though mention has been made of Gopala Bhatta in some books of later period dealing with the history and society of the Vaisnavas, they differ widely from one another.

It has been said that during his sojourn in the Southern India Caitanya passed four months of the rainy season at the house of a Vaisnava devotee Trimalla. Gopala Bhatta was the son of Trimalla. The teen-ager Gopala is said to have been initiated by Caitanya himself. Some Vaisnava authors think that Trimalla Bhatta, Venkata Bhatta and Prabodhananda Sarasvati were three brothers. They belonged to the Vaisnava cult and were worshippers of Laksminarayana.

Gopala Bhatta, however, is said to have composed *Haribhaktivilasa*, the noted Vaisnava *smrtisastra*. It contains altogether 20 chapters. This is an exposition of social customs and duties to be performed by the Vaisnava. Scriptural devotion (*vaidhibhakti* or *sastramargiyabhakti*) has been explained here. Mention has been made of Tantric

customs in this book particularly in the act of initiation, but it maintain a queer silence about *rasayatra*, so dear to the Vaisnavas. Gopala Bhatta mentioned nowhere the worship of Caitanya or the installation of Caitanya's idol.

After the demise of Rupa and Sanatana, Gopala Bhatta has unanimously been accepted as the preceptor (*guru*) of the Vaisnavas of Vrindavana. Srinathacarya, the noted Vaisnava leader of later period was the disciple of Gopala Bhatta and took from him lessons on Vaisnava philosophy.

Sanatana Gosvamin: Books written in Sanskrit by the three Gosvamins of Vrindavana namely Sanatana, Rupa and Jiva made the very foundation of Vaisnava philosophy. Save their contribution Caitanya cult could not transform itself into a distinguished religion. These three Gosvamins were all brahmins belonging to South India. Of them, Sanatana was the eldest brother, Rupa the second and Vallabha or Anupama the third. Jiva was the son of Vallabha. The ancestors of Sanatana Gosvamin, originally belonged to Karnataka, but had left their ancestral home and came to settle at Bengal only for political and family turmoil. Sanatana's father was Kumaradeva. Davir Khas was the title of Rupa and Sakar Mallik of Sanatana. They were ministers of Hussain Shah, king of Gauda. Anupama or Vallabha was the manager of Hussain Shah's mint. They never embraced Islamism. But due to their constant co-existence with Muslims, they hesitated to be quite free in the circle of brahmins and Vaisnavas. Some have mentioned them as Pirali Muslims. This however seems to lack cogency. In fact, they remained ever scrupulously chaste and modest, the significant attributes of a true Vaisnava. Sanatana studied in the *pathasala* of Vidyavacaspati, a noted scholar in *nyaya* philosophy. He got acquainted with Caitanya at Gauda on his way to Vrindavana. But long since their meeting with Caitanya they were attracted towards the liberalism of Vaisnava faith. Sanatana was reluctant to accompany King Hussain Shah in his expedition to Kalinga (Orissa) for which he was imprisoned. However Sanatana managed to escape and fled to Vrindavana where Rupa had earlier fled. They were initiated by Caitanya. Sanatana's contribution to the development of Vaisnava faith and culture is highly

commendable. Sanatana died at the middle part of the sixteenth century A.D.

According to the list made by Jiva Gosvamin, Sanatana composed the following books :

1. *Brhadbhagavatamrta*
2. *Haribhaktivilasa*
3. *Lilastava* or *Dasamacarita* (not available)
4. *Vaisnavatosani*.

Of the books stated above, *Brhadbhagavatamrta* is a poetical work dealing with the philosophy of Gaudia Vaisnavism. *Haribhaktivilasa* has been discussed in connection with Gopala Bhatta. *Vaisnavatosani* is a commentary of the tenth chapter (*skandha*) of *Srimadbhagavata*. It has been abridged by Jiva Gosvamin and is known by the name *Laghutosani*.

Rupa Gosvamin: Rupa was known by the name Davir Khas. He held a high post in Hussain Shah's court. Like Sanatana he too was attracted towards the liberalism and humanity of the Vaisnava faith long before their meeting with Caitanya. On some pretext Rupa left Ramakeli and met Caitanya who latter on, initiated the dedicated devotee. Advised by Sricaitanya Rupa went to Vrindavana and composed treatises on Vaisnava faith and philosophy. Rupa died earlier than his elder brother Sanatana. A list of the works composed by him is given below :

1. Poetry—*Hamsaduta*, *Uddhavasandesa*, *Stavamala*
2. Drama—*Vidagdhamadhava*, *Lalitamadhava*, *Danakelikaumudi*
3. Rasatattva and Poetics—*Bhaktirasamrtasindhu*, *Ujjvalanilamani*
4. Collection of verses—*Padyavali*
5. Dramaturgy—*Natakacandrika*
6. Religion—*Samksipta Bhagavatamrta*

Of these works *Vidagdhamadhava*, *Lalitamadhava* and *Ujjvalanilamani* are noted for various reasons. Rupa blended within himself the talent of a poet and the subtle reasoning of a critic. His *Bhaktirasamrtasindhu* and *Ujjvalanilamani* nourished the Vaisnava faith, philosophy and literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth century to a greater extent.

Jiva Gosvamin: Of the three noted Gosvamins of Vrindavana, Jiva deserves special mention. Jiva is specially noted for his analytical faculty and harmonizing power. Sanatana was basically a commentator, Rupa was a poet and connoisseur, but their nephew Jiva was chiefly a philosopher.

Jiva was a mere boy when Caitanya left this mundane world. At a very early age he renounced the world and went to Navadvipa. Directed by Nityananda he went Varanasi and studied *vyakarana*, *smrti* and *vedanta* under the guidance of Madhusudana Vacaspati. He combined within himself the subtle feeling of a philosopher and the organising power of a religious leader. He composed the following works.

1. Poetry—*Gopalacampu*, *Samkalpakalpadruma*, *Madhavamahotsava*, *Gopalavirudavali*
2. Grammar and Rasasastra—*Harinamamrtavyakarana*, *Sutramalika*, *Rasamrtasesa*, *Locanarocani*
3. Vaisnavasmrti and theory of religion—*Krishnacaryadipika*, *Gopalatapani*, *Brahmasamtuta*, *Kramasandarbha*, *Laghutosani*
4. Vaisnava philosophy—*Bhagavatasandarbha* or *Satsandarbha*, *Sarvasambadini*

The list itself shows the diversified talent of Jiva Gosvamin. Just as Rupa Gosvamin made a skillful analysis of devotion and sentiment (*rasa*), likewise Jiva Gosvamin made a thorough survey of Gaudiya Vaisnavism in the light of a far-fetching talent and transformed by his unique intellect, a quite emotional religion into a scholastic philosophy. Save the effort of a great talent like Jiva Gosvamin, Gaudiya Vaisnavism could not have become a universal religion.

The Teachings of Caitanya

Caitanya never wrote a single line. On some occasions he gave sermons to his associates. Moreover, his learned discussions with the leading scholars of his age constituted the very base of his teachings. His life itself, as it were, is his message.

Caitanya once addressed Svarupa Damodara and Ray Ramananda and said, chanting of names removes all the evils from the minds of the person doing it. It ensures all good things to happen and enables love for Krishna to be aroused in the mind. When a great fire erupts it scorches everyone nearby. This life of ours in this world and particularly the domestic life and the associated relations in the human society emanates terrible heat and thus scorches and burns us also. *Krishnasamkirtana* soothes away that heat and eliminates that burning sensation. Kumuda flowers blossom only when the sky is moonlit, otherwise not. *Krishnasamkirtana* also is that sort of moonlight which helps all the nicest and finest flowers in our minds to blossom forth. It is the soul of true knowledge. It increases the blissful state of mind, and each of the alphabets of the *Krishnasamkirtana* enables one to taste and appreciate the life's ambrosia. It embalms the soul. It is thus more glorious than any other means and path.

No hard and fast rule is observed to utter the names of Hari. Any time, any moment, any place is most suitable to utter and chant these names. If one has to achieve all the

results in totality that the chanting of these sacred names could render, then one has to be the most humble, one must bear all the difficulties placed in one's life as a tree does, one must not crave at all for personal recognition, but instead one must revere and respect others all the time and one must all the time go on chanting and uttering Krishna's name.

How much materialistic wealth one possesses is the yardstick of one's intrinsic worth and success in life. But it is a falsity. Caitanya taught us that how much devotion one has for Krishna, how much selfless love one acquires being devoted to Krishna, is the only yardstick by which one's real worth in life on this earth is to be measured. In fact, one who has not possessed this devotion, this love for Krishna, is poor. He is living a life of poverty. One must pray to Krishna to be awarded this love for him and particularly this selfless devotion for him, the desire to utter and chant his name. Without having achieved this, our life is worthless.

At the peak of his Krishna-separation-feelings, he even felt that the attendants and friends of Sriradha were advising him to forget the cruel, heartless Krishna, who had no feelings for Radha. They advised Caitanya to leave Krishna for ever. In reply to their advice he proclaimed that even in all adverse situations of life Srikrishna is the only resort. To this world Caitanya divulged the deepest feelings of love which Sriradha had for her beloved Krishna. By his own life he has taught us what we all should do to get Krishna the Supreme concentrated bliss.

Though Caitanya was immersed totally in realising and appreciating the feelings of *vrajarasa*, yet he never forgot for a single moment his mother Saci Devi and his birth place Nadia. Every year through Jagadananda, Caitanya used to send fine clothes to his mother. Lord Jagannatha's *mahaprasada* was also specifically brought from the temple to be sent to her by her son. Of course, *mahaprasada* was sent for other devotees of Navadvipa too; but for his mother this was sent with a special and tender care, and with a deep touch of love that only a son could do for his beloved and most respected mother. Jagadananda when he went to Navadvipa once a year, used to tell Saci Devi all what Caitanya directed him to tell her. At Navadvipa whenever

Jagadananda returned from Puri, he spent his entire time sitting beside Saci Devi narrating all the sportive plays of Caitanya. Saci, for the time being, forgot the sorrow of separation from her darling Nimai. It was Nimai's own way of showing to the whole world that a mother is above everything. By this he again taught us what *vatsalyarasa* is and what a son's duty towards his mother must be.

The Philosophy of Caitanya

Caitanya was not a philosopher in the sense that Samkara, Ramanuja, Kant and Hegel are. Philosophers, as we call them, generally deal with metaphysics, cosmology, ethics, psychology. Their discussions are logical, systematic and sometimes even polemic. They try to bring out a consistency within the subjects they deal with.

Caitanya, however, was nothing of that sort. What to speak of philosophy, he hardly penned even a single line on any subject whatsoever. He left no writings for posterity. Nevertheless, he is to be considered a philosopher of the highest order. Each and every word uttered by him was pregnant with the highest philosophical meanings. The instructions he gave others, were all based on the profoundest metaphysics. They were logical, coherent and consistent. The underlying philosophy of Caitanya's life and teachings was brought to light by six of his most eminent devotees generally known as the six erudite scholarly apostles.

The Upanisads which embody the intuitive realisation of our ancient seers, constitute the essential philosophy of the Indian thinkers. The endless varieties of Upanisadic thought were systematised in five hundred aphorisms by one Vadarayana, who possessed inestimable talent and insight. This collection is called the *Brahmasutras*. Great Indian thinkers like Samkara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva, and Vallabha all wrote elaborate and expository treatises on these aphorisms.

Different commentators gave different interpretations because of their individual intuitive and environmental personal experiences, Thus came into existence five different systems or schools of one and the same truth, i.e. of the Brahmasutras.

These five systems are styled as:

1. *Advaitavada* — the absolute monism of Samkara;
2. *Visistadvaitavada* — Ramanuja;
3. *Bhedabhedavada*—The monistic dualism of Nimbarka.
4. *Dvaitavada*—The dualism of Madhva
5. *Suddhadvaitavada*—The pure monism of Vallabha.

Caitanya shines singly with his *acintyabhedabhedavada*—diversity in unity and identity. This was interpreted logically and established by Srijiva Gosvamin and Baladeva Vidyabhusana after Caitanya disappeared from our mundane world. The analysis of this system, i.e. the *acintyabhedabhedavada* bring out clearly two principal modes of approach towards the Supreme reality—one through pure knowledge (*jnana*) and the other through the purest devotion (*bhakti*). The path of knowledge aims at trying to know perfectly the reality through identity with him, whereas the approach of devotion leads to the dedicated service of the Supreme reality. The followers of the knowledge mode are called wise. Samkara stands out as the highest amongst the wise. Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabha are called devotees (*bhakta*). Caitanya can be regarded as the king in the realm of devotees. Truly speaking, He is god himself in the garb of a pure and dedicated devotee.

The Theory of Love Divine

(Prematattva)

The theory of love divine is one of the most sublime contributions of Caitanya. He expressed the depth of his mind to Sanatana Gosvamin when he said, "Love (*prema*) is the substantia of highest value in the world". The entire existence is a gradual system of truth and value. Truth may be concluded in value. There are three ideal values: *satyam*—truth; *sivam*—goodness and *sundaram*—beauty. In the supraconscious state these three ideal values are most completely manifested for all times. The supraconscious state is full of bliss. Solidified bliss is *ananda* and *prema* is the same as *ananda* and *ananda* is identical with *prema*.

Levels of consciousness are differently conceived. They are called *kosa* or sheaths. The outermost sheath is gross matter—*annamayakosa*. The next interior sheath is the level of thought. This level is sub-divided into two sheaths *pranamayakosa* and *manomayakosa*, i.e. life and mind. The third level is that of intelligence—*vijnanamayakosa*. And the innermost sheath or the hard core itself is the *anandamayakosa*, that is, bliss solidified. *Anand* and *prema* are identical. The realisation of *prema* is the same as the realisation of the Supreme.

The ultimate substance, according to Caitanya, is consciousness (*caitanya*). According to *advaita vedanta* conscious-

ness has no power, but Caitanya holds the view that consciousness does have power (*sakti*). Will power (*icchasakti*) is the power of consciousness. Three kinds of will power are recognised—the will to do, the will to know and the will to enjoy—*kriya*, *jnana* and *ananda*. These three phases find expression in action, in knowledge, and in the joy of life. These three modes are inseparable. To know is to exist and feel happy. To exist is to know and be happy. And to be happy is to possess knowledge and feel existence. This shows that will power constitutes a unity. It is neither to do nor to know, nor to enjoy, but all of them simultaneously. Thus unity of will power is the essential power of consciousness and that is what Caitanya calls the love. It is also called the innermost *sakti* (*antarangasakti*).

The word *svarupasakti* has two meanings: first, the *svarupa* of Krishna is identical with his *sakti*; second, the *sakti* that has emanated from the *svarupa* of Krishna. In the first sense, Krishna and Radha are one and the same, for example, fire and its capacity to burn. These two aspects can never be separated. In the second sense, Radha is another personality who has evolved from Krishna. In this sense Radha and Krishna are two different individuals. They are then like two wicks on a single lamp. They illuminate each other and make each other's existence meaningful.

The Theory of Rasa

(Rasatattva)

The unique and significant feature which constitutes the mystical aspect of Caitanya consists in the *rasatattva*. In the Vaisnava literature the use of *rasa* is a bit peculiar and has become a technical terminology of the greatest importance. *Rasa* means relishable flavour. When a thing is pleasurable or enjoyable, it is said to possess *rasa*. That which accounts for the pleasurableness of an object is called *rasa*. All *rasas* are said to be the *rasa* of God. It is God in an object that makes that object pleasurable.

As life implies joy, and joy implies life, Hindu philosophy has very appropriately hit upon the single expression *rasa* to denote both phases of the same thing. *Rasa* is the vital essence of everything that lives and grows. It is the principle of joy that stands for life and expansion of the soul.

Caitanya calls the godhead the embodiment of love and the king of rasa (*premamayarasaraja*). Love and joy are said to be two aspects of one essence which is *rasa*. *Rasa* is called the quintessence of consciousness and the Lord is concentrated *rasa* (*rasaghana*). The enjoyment of love in its truest sense conveys the need of a companion. In order to become himself in the fullest sense, the Lord has to create his associates. "Unity, even at the very root, chooses to show itself in variety". That is the essence of the doctrine of

Caitanya.

Radha and Krishna are identical in reality, even though a concrete realisation of love demands an apparent difference between them. The 'Being for self' (Krishna) is the charming embodiment and agent of the most Supreme delight, and the 'Being for expression' (Radha) is the inner essence and creator of the rhythm of that love life.

The sweetness of love increases as this progresses from servant-master relationship through friendship, mother-child relationship finally culminating in wife and beloved relationship. The 'Being for expression' which is Radha thus approaches closer and closer to the 'Being for self', i.e. Krishna, and ultimately both become united again. When this unification takes place, 'godhead' becomes more enriched and more sweet. This is Caitanya, the spiritual fusion of the 'Being for expression' and the 'Being for self', that is, both Radha and Krishna—Radha, the antithesis of Krishna and Krishna found their final synthesis in Caitanya. This is the spiritual dialectic of love.

The philosophy of Caitanya therefore, peculiarly finds its culmination in his very personality. Nowhere can be found a singular personality identical with the essence of his own philosophy. Although this is rather a strange phenomenon yet it is essentially true and a fact of history.

Siksastaka

(Octet of Teaching)

Caitanya teaches the universe at large that in the cult of unalloyed devotion (*bhaktiyoga*), the means (*sadhana*) as well as the end (*sadhya*) are identical and that the foremost and supreme means of attaining that end or summum bonum of human existence is chanting of the holy name (*nama-samkirtana*). For, in this iron age of *kali,* the Supreme Lord Krishna descends as the holy name. The holy name is endowed with the prerogative of redeeming the whole world. The sum and substance of all scriptural lore is that the holy name is the quintessence of all sacred incantations. Thrilled with utter bliss and transported to rapturous ecstasy, Caitanya spoke, "Listen, O Damodara Svarupa and Ray Ramananda, the Supreme and the most cogent panacea of all world-evils in this iron age of *kali* is chanting the holy name of Krishna.

It is to be presumed that shortly before his disappearance, Caitanya asked Ray Ramananda to recollect, for all time to come, the devotional ontology which he embodied in his eight verses now known as *siksastaka*. The sermon he delivered to his followers for their sure guidance in their spiritual progress. These eight verses of his own composition, (according to some, however, only the first five of the eight verses were written by him embodying the quintessence of his spiritual outlook) form his first and last message to the humanity at large.

Siksastaka

The sevenfold efficacy of chanting the holy name:

cetodarpaṇamārjanaṃ bhavamahādāvāgninirvāpaṇam
śreyaḥkairavacandrikāvitaraṇaṃ vidyāvadhūjīvanam
ānandāmbudhivardhanaṃ pratipadaṃ pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātmasnapanaṃ paraṃ vijayate śrīkṛṣṇasaṃkīrtanam...1

polishing all the dirts
from the mirrors of our hearts,
quenching the great forest-fire of affliction
from the cycle of births and deaths,
shedding moon-beams
upon the lily of eternal good,
life of His charming bride,
muse of real burning,
augmentor of the swelling ocean of eternal bliss,
imparting, at every utterance of the holy name,
the perfect relish of pure nectar,
ensuring the cooling immersion
of every limb of the soul,
may the chanting
of the holy name of Krishna
be intensely glorified

(2)

Misfortune of no relish for the holy name :

nāmnām akāri bahudhā nijasarvaśaktis-
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ.
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ...2.

full many are the names Thou dost manifest,
hem Thou hast imbued with all Thy power;
no fixed time remains
for their recollections,
such is the greatness of Thy compassion,
O my Lord !
But no less unhappy is my ill condition,
for I am unable to love Thy names !

(3)

Eligibility of chanting the holy name :

trṇād api sunīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ...3

by humility lowlier far
than that of a tiny blade of grass,
by forbearance more enduring
than that of a patient tree,
seeking no honour for oneself,
ungrudgingly
showing all the respect that is their due,
it is one's duty at all time
to chant the name of Hari.

(4)

Procedure of prayer while chanting the holy name :

na dhanaṃ na janaṃ na sundarīṃ
kavitāṃ vā jagadīśa kāmaye
mama janmani janmanīśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi...4
renown nor wealth nor a paragon
of beauty, Lord, I crave
nor even the muses will implore :
I long to stay Thy slave.
through countless births this boon unique
I sought, may Thou approve :
my heart be surrendered at Thy feet
In an unbargaining love....4

(5)

The true conception of the chanter of the holy name :

ayi nandatanuja kiṅkaraṃ
patitaṃ māṃ viṣame bhavāmbudhau
kṛpayā tava pādapaṅkaja-
sthitadhūlisadṛśaṃ vicintaya...5

O son of Nanda !
I, Thy servant,
fallen into this terrible ocean of the world,
may Thou in mercy make of me
even as a speek of dust
clinging to Thy lotus-feet....5.

(6)

nayanaṃ galadaśrudhārayā
vadanaṃ gadgadaruddhayā girā
pulakair nicitaṃ vapuḥ kadā
tava nāmagrahaṇe bhaviṣyati...6
oh, when will my eyes overflow with tears,
my voice, husky with love,
choke all utterance on my lips,
and all my limbs
vibrate with tender bliss,
while taking Thy sacred name...6.

(7)

yugāyitaṃ nimeṣeṇa
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam
śūnyāyitaṃ jagat sarvaṃ
govindaviraheṇa me...7
one wink resembles the passing of an aeon,
the eye-lid blots out all
as does the gloomy term of pouring clouds,
and the whole world
appears to me
one dreary void,
bereft of the sight of Govinda...7

(8)

āśliṣya vā pādaratāṃ pinaṣṭu mām
adarśanān marmahatāṃ karotu vā
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampaṭo
matprāṇanāthas tu sa eva nāparaḥ...8

whether He tramples on me, my Lord,
or hugs me tenderly :
my life is given to Him alone
for all eternity.
whether He spurns me from His door
Or will abide with me :
my thoughts will dwell in Him alone
in pain or ecstasy.
whether He courts me or consorts.
with the fickle frivolously :
my heart will bow to Him alone
none else my King shall be.......8

In course of his religious discourse Caitanya told these to his close associates. It has been stated that he, in his early life, had written a commentary on grammar (*vyakarana*) which was acclaimed and applauded by the contemporary scholars. It is not known to us with certitude whether he wrote anything else than these.

These verses primarily denote deep reverence and high ideal. The loftiest conception that has been expressed in the third verse can hardly be imitated. The fourth verse particularly expresses complete surrender to the Almighty declaring thereby the desire for deserting worldly objects. The main feature of the verses lies in the fact that these denote not any particular communal or philosophical view. These, therefore, have a universal appeal to the people, belonging to any religious or philosophical view of the world.

Caitanya's Contribution

The assessment of Caitanya's contribution in the context of the decadent Bengal society of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is not too simple a task. Caitanya may fairly be taken as a spokesman of cultural renaissance of the then Hindu society, governed by Muslim rulers. He seems not to have stood directly against the prevailing caste system, but tried to evoke the consciousness of the mass towards the destructive evils of the society. Ignoring sternly the conservative and narrow outlook of the feudal age (the time of Caitanya's emergence is, in all respects, called the age of feudalism), Caitanya preached his broad and liberal view, characterised by kindness to all beings, devotion to God, and particularly the introduction of *namasamkirtana*. He established the right of all people, irrespective of caste and creed in the worship of Krishna. He has been successful in arranging a great festival of love divine with people, belonging to all walks of life, even at Puri in front of the chariot of Lord Jagannatha. We may call these daring efforts as democratic in the context of the then society, characterised by conservatism and orthodoxy. But these democratic efforts seem to be averse towards the eradication of the autocrat rulers and the establishment of social integration by abolishing the difference of high and low in the society. In this respect, Caitanya can be compared to Buddha. They are undoubtedly great reformers of the society, but not rebels, not even revolutionaries.

The Upanisads proclaim in no uncertain terms a deep reverence towards humanity. In the Vaisnava faith and religion this victory for humanity has also been echoed. According to Rabindranath Tagore love for humanity characterises greatly the character of Caitanya. What impressed the great poet overwhelmingly was the respect for humanity, preached by Caitanya. In the Padavali literature too, man's predominance over everything has been shown.

Caitanya played chiefly the role of a reformer, an idealist revolutionary like other religious leaders of medieval period. He aroused in the minds of the people a sympathy for the contemporary age, a sense of honour and values and proclaimed in no uncertain terms, a divine greatness of the mortals. The result of this found in an incredibly outburst of creative faculty in their socio-cultural awakening in literature, philosophy, science and the like. But the summum bonum about a Supreme Being like Caitanya is that he was more the maker of his age than its product. It has been rightly remarked, "He is an individual who shone as a great exponent of the highest philosophy as ever conceived by man, but at the same time a teacher who could mould the mind and action of that undefinable element known as the crowd or the mass. He was a rare combination of the realist and the practical, a mastermind whose magic was matched by the equally potential virtue of logic, and a noble teacher, endowed alike with love and rationality who could transform a whole nation by his appeal to their intellect and emotion alike."

Caitanya's contribution may be assessed from a different viewpoint. With his dynamic personality Caitanya has broadened the outlook of the nostalgic Bengali society of fifteenth century. It is known to us that Caitanya emerged during the region of independent Sultans of Bengal. The Sultans of Bengal were often engaged in skirmishes with the neighbouring countries. As a result people seldom went out of Bengal. The merchants and traders of the then Bengal remained idle as outside business transactions were captured entirely by the external traders. The communication link of the then Bengali society with the outer Bengal had totally been disrupted. Going on pilgrimage tours to Vrindavana

and Puri opened that way of communication newly.

The relevance of Sricaitanya can be viewed on a larger context also. Although he was often plunged in divine ecstasy, the cultural map of India remained ever extended in the kingdom of his heart, otherwise he could have not sent six great intellectuals of that time to Vrindavana as the leaders of the Vaisnava movement. Not from a political point of view but from philosophical and spiritual standpoint Gauda was not alienated from the greater India. The intellect and spiritual tradition of Bengal added only a special dimension to it. He resolved to unite the entire India in the tie of a religion. In this sense he may be called a true maker of national integration.

It is Caitanya who, breaking the convention, established womens' right in religious performances. Thus we find Jahnavi Devi, wife of Nityananda, as the preacher of religion in Vrindavana, Visnupriya as the preceptor in the religions gathering of Kheturi. Sita Devi, Nandini, Malini, Madhavi—they all were entrusted with their respective religious duties.

This aged world of ours experienced too many crusades leading ultimately to profuse bloodshed. But the spiritual victory that was won by Caitanya was of a different type causing thereby not a drop of blood. There are rare parallels to such instances.

The entire life of this great personality deserves further research and deep analysis. He has been reviewed and continues to be reviewed in every nook and corner of the world. Karl Marx, one of the great thinkers of modern society, mentioned him as the reformer and a spokesman of liberality against the caste system.

His relevance even in the modern world of space rockets, computers and electronics is sufficiently proved by the fact that he still remains a subject of discussion in home and abroad even after a long period of five hundred years. The overwhelming acceptability and the rapid expansion of the religion, preached by Caitanya proves with certitude the relevance of Vaisnavism even in these days.

Pronunciation Key

Spelt in the text	*Transliteration with standard diacritical marks*
Acaladarubrahma	Acaladārubrahma
Acarya	Ācārya
Acintyabhedabhedavada	Acintyabhedābhedavāda
Advaitacarya	Advaitācārya
Advaitavada	Advaitavāda
Advaita Vedanta	Advaita Vedānta
Aitota	Aiṭotā
Ananda	Ānanda
Anantapadmanabha	Anantapadmanābha
Annamayakosa	Annamayakoṣa
Antarangasakti	Antaraṅgaśakti
Aparadhabhanjaner pat	Aparādhabhañjaner pāṭ
Aprakatalila	Aprakaṭalīlā
Asadha	Āṣāḍha
Aulcand	Aulcā̃nd
Avadhuta	Avadhūta
Baladeva Vidyabhusana	Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
Balarama	Balarāma
Bhagavatamrta	Bhāgavatāmṛta
Bhagavatasandarbha	Bhāgavatasandarbha
Bhaktirasamrtasindhu	Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu
Bhaktiratnakara	Bhaktiratnākara
Bharati	Bhāratī

Bhedabhedavada	Bhedābhedavāda
Brahmananda	Brahmānanda
Brahmananda Bharati	Brahmānanda Bhāratī
Brahmasamhita	Brahmasaṃhitā
Brahmasutra	Brahmasūtra
Brhadbhagavatamrta	Bṛhadbhāgavatāmṛta
Brhaspati	Bṛhaspati
Buro Ganga	Budo Gaṅgā
Caitanyabhagavata	Caitanyabhāgavata
Caitanyacaritamrta	Caitanyacaritāmṛta
Caitanyamangala	Caitanyamaṅgala
Caitanyavilasa	Caitanyavilāsa
Candidasa	Caṇḍīdāsa
Cand Kazi	Cā̃nd Kāzi
Candpara	Cā̃ndpāḍā
Candrasekhara	Candraśekhara
Caturmasya	Cāturmāsya
Catuspathi	Catuṣpāṭhī
Damodara Pandita	Dāmodara Paṇḍita
Damodara Svarupa	Dāmodara Svarūpa
Danakelikaumudi	Dānakelikaumudī
Danalila	Dānalīlā
Dandabhanga	Daṇḍabhaṅga
Darubrahma	Dārubrahma
Dasamacarita	Daśamacarita
Devadasi	Devadāsī
Devananda	Devānanda
Doha	Dohā
Dvadasadasa	Dvādaśadaśā
Dvaitavada	Dvaitavāda
Gadadhara	Gadādhara
Gambhira	Gambhīrā
Ganga	Gaṅgā
Gangadasa	Gaṅgādāsa
Garudastambha	Garuḍastambha
Gauda	Gauḍa
Gaudavanga	Gauḍavaṅga
Gaudiya	Gauḍīya
Gaurakrishnodayakavya	Gaurakṛṣṇodayakāvya
Gauranagaravada	Gauranagaravāda

Gauranga	Gaurāṅga
Gitagovinda	Gītagovinda
Gopala	Gopāla
Gopala Bhatta	Gopāla Bhaṭṭa
Gopala Campu	Gopāla Campū
Gopalamantra	Gopālamantra
Gopalatapani	Gopālatāpanī
Gopalavirudavali	Gopālavirudāvalī
Gopi	Gopī
Gopinatha	Gopīnātha
Gosvamin	Gosvāmin
Govinda Dasa	Govinda Dāsa
Govinda Vidyadhara	Govinda Vidyādhara
Gundicamandira	Guṇḍicāmandira
Gundicavati	Guṇḍicāvāṭi
Hamsaduta	Haṃsadūta
Haribhaktivilasa	Haribhaktivilāsa
Haridasa	Haridāsa
Harikrishna	Harikṛṣṇa
Harinama	Harināma
Harinamamrta	Harināmāmṛta
Icchasakti	Icchāśakti
Isvarapuri	Īśvarapurī
Jagadisa	Jagadīśa
Jagai	Jagāi
Jagannathacaritamrta	Jagannāthacaritāmṛta
Jagannatha Mishra	Jagannātha Miśra
Jagannathavallabha	Jagannāthavallabha
Jahnavi Devi	Jāhnavī Devī
Janardana	Janārdana
Jayananda	Jayānanda
Jita Mishra	Jita Miśra
Jiva	Jiva
Jnana	Jñāna
Kadca	Kaḍcā
Kalapahad	Kālāpāhāḍ
Kalapavyakarana	Kalāpavyākaraṇa
Kalavati	Kalāvatī
Kaliya	Kālīya
Kamalakanta	Kamalākānta

Kamalakara	Kamalākara
Kamalaksa	Kamalākṣa
Kanainatshala	Kānāināṭśālā
Kartabhaja	Kartābhajā
Kasi Mishra	Kāśī Miśra
Kavikarnapura	Kavikarṇapūra
Kesava Bharati	Keśava Bhāratī
Kesava Bhatta	Keśava Bhaṭṭa
Khanda	Khaṇḍa
Kholbhangardanga	Kholbhāṅgārdāṅgā
Kosa	Koṣa
Krishna	Kṛṣṇa
Krishnacaryadipika	Kṛṣṇacaryadīpikā
Krishnadasa Kaviraja	Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja
Krishnakarnamrta	Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta
Krishnakirtana	Kṛṣṇakīrtana
Krishnalila	Kṛṣṇalīlā
Krishnalilamrta	Kṛṣṇalīlāmṛta
Krishnananda	Kṛṣṇānanda
Krishnaprema	Kṛṣṇaprema
Kriya	Kriyā
Ksiraprasada	Kṣīraprasāda
Kulinatantra	Kulīnatantra
Kumaradeva	Kumāradeva
Kuvera Pandita	Kuvera Paṇḍita
Kuvera Tarkapancanana	Kuvera Tarkapañcānana
Laghutosani	Laghutoṣaṇī
Laksmanasena	Lakṣmaṇasena
Laksmi Devi	Lakṣmī Devī
Laksminarayana	Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa
Lalitamadhava	Lalitamādhava
Lila	Līlā
Lilastava	Līlāstava
Locana Dasa	Locana Dāsa
Locanarocani	Locanarocanī
Madanagopala	Madanagopāla
Madhai	Mādhāi
Madhava	Mādhava
Madhavamahotsava	Mādhavamahotsava
Madhavendrepuri	Mādhavendrapurī

Madhavi	Mādhavī
Madhusudana Vacaspati	Madhusūdana Vācaspati
Madhva	Mādhva
Mahabharata	Mahābhārata
Mahabhava	Mahābhāva
Mahaprabhu	Mahāprabhu
Mahaprasada	Mahāprasāda
Maladhara Basu	Mālādhara Basu
Malini	Mālinī
Mamu Thakura	Māmu Ṭhākura
Mangalakavya	Maṅgalakāvya
Mangalarati	Maṅgalārati
Manomayakosa	Manomayakoṣa
Mayapura	Māyāpura
Mayavada	Māyāvāda
Mishra Purandara	Miśra Purandara
Mrdanga	Mṛdaṅga
Mukunda Sanjaya	Mukunda Sañjaya
Murari Gupta	Murāri Gupta
Naimisaranya	Naimiṣāraṇya
Namabhajana	Nāmabhajana
Namabrahma	Nāmabrahma
Namadharma	Nāmadharma
Namayajna	Nāmayajña
Nandini	Nandinī
Narahari Chakravarty	Narahari Cakravartī
Narasimhadeva	Narasiṃhadeva
Narayani	Nārāyaṇī
Narottama Thakura	Narottama Ṭhākura
Natakacandrika	Nāṭakacandrikā
Navadvipa	Navadvīpa
Navya Nyaya	Navya Nyāya
Nilacala	Nīlācala
Nilambara Chakravarty	Nīlāmbara Cakravartī
Nimai	Nimāi
Nimbarka	Nimbārka
Nityananda	Nityānanda
Nrsimhadeva	Nṛsiṃhadeva
Nyaya	Nyāya
Padavali	Padāvalī

Padmavati	Padmāvatī
Padyavali	Padyāvalī
Pala	Pāla
Pancali	Pāñcālī
Panda	Pāṇḍā
Paragal Khan	Parāgal Khān
Paramanandapuri	Paramānandapurī
Pathasala	Pāṭhaśālā
Prabodhananda Sarasvati	Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī
Prahlada	Prahlāda
Prakasananda	Prakāśānanda
Prakasananda Sarasvati	Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī
Pranamayakosa	Prāṇamayakoṣa
Prataparudra	Pratāparudra
Premamayarasaraja	Premamayarasarāja
Premaparavidha stotra	Premāparavidha stotra
Pundarika Vidyanidhi	Puṇḍarika Vidyānidhi
Purusottama	Puruṣottama
Pustimarga	Puṣṭimārga
Radha	Rāḍha
Radha	Rādhā
Radhakrishna	Rādhākṛṣṇa
Raghunatha Bhatta	Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa
Raghunatha Dasa	Raghunātha Dāsa
Rama	Rāma
Ramakeli	Rāmakelī
Ramananda	Rāmānanda
Ramanuja	Rāmānuja
Ramanujacarya	Rāmānujācārya
Ramayana	Rāmāyaṇa
Ramayet	Rāmāyet
Rasalila	Rāsalīlā
Rasamrtasesa	Rasāmṛtaśeṣa
Rasasastra	Rasaśāstra
Rasayatra	Rāsayātrā
Rathayatra	Rathayātrā
Ray Lakhmania	Rāya Lakhmaniā
Ray Ramananda	Rāya Rāmānanda
Rukmini	Rukmiṇī
Rupa	Rūpa

Saci Devi	Śacī Devī
Sadhana	Sādhanā
Sadhya	Sādhya
Sakabda	Śakābda
Saksigopala	Sākśīgopāla
Sakti	Śakti
Samkalpakalpadruma	Saṃkalpakalpadruma
Samkirtana	Saṃkīrtana
Samksiptabhagavatamrta	Samkṣiptabhāgavatāmṛta
Sampradaya	Saṃpradāya
Sanatana	Sanātana
Sanatana Mishra	Sanātana Miśra
Sannyasa	Sannyāsa
Saptagrama	Saptagrāma
Saptamitithi	Saptamītithi
Sarasvati	Sarasvatī
Sarvabhauma	Sārvabhauma
Sarvasamvadini	Sarvasaṃvādinī
Sastra	Śāstra
Sastramargiyabhakti	Śāstramargīyabhakti
Sastric	Śāstric
Satsandarbha	Ṣaṭsandarbha
Sattvika	Sāttvika
Siksastaka	Śikṣāṣṭaka
Sita Devi	Sītā Devī
Sivam	Śivam
Sloka	Śloka
Smarta	Smārta
Smrti	Smṛti
Smrtisastra	Smṛtiśāstra
Sridhama	Śrīdhāma
Sridhara	Śrīdhara
Srihari	Śrīhari
Sri isvarapuri	Śrī Īśvarapurī
Srijiva	Śrījīva
Srikrishna	Śrīkṛṣṇa
Srimadbhagavata	Śrīmadbhāgavata
Srimadhavendrapuri	Śrīmādhavendrapurīī
Srimadhusudana	Śrīmadhusūdana
Srinathacarya	Śrīnāthācārya

Sriradhakrishna	Śrīrādhākṛṣṇa
Srirupa	Śrīrūpa
Srisanatana	Śrīsanātana
Srisanatanasiksa	Śrīsanātanaśikṣā
Srisrikrishnacaitanyacaritamrta	Śrīśrī kṛṣṇa-caitanyacaritāmṛta
Srivasa	Śrīvāsa
Stavamala	Stavamālā
Suddhadvaitavada	Śuddhādvaitavāda
Sukhi	Sukhī
Suklapaksa	Śuklapakṣa
Sutramalika	Sūtramālikā
Svarupasakti	Svarūpaśākti
Tapana Mishra	Tapana Miśra
Telengi	Teleṅgī
Tirtha	Tīrtha
Tirumalla Bhatta	Tirumalla Bhaṭṭa
Tota Gopinatha	Totā Gopīnātha
Uddhavasandesa	Uddhavasandeśa
Ujjvalanilamani	Ujjvalanīlamaṇi
Upanisad	Upaniṣad
Upendra Mishra	Upendra Miśra
Utkaladesa	Utkaladeśa
Vadarayana	Vādarāyaṇa
Vadisimha	Vādīsiṃha
Vaidhibhakti	Vaidhībhakti
Vaisnava	Vaiṣṇava
Vaisnavatosani	Vaiṣṇavatoṣaṇī
Vaisnavism	Vaiṣṇavism
Vallabhabhatta	Vallabhabhaṭṭa
Vallabhacarya	Vallabhācārya
Vallalasena	Vallālasena
Varnasramadharma	Varṇāśramadharma
Vasudeva Sarvabhauma	Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma
Vatsalyarasa	Vātsalyarasa
Vedanta	Vedānta
Vedapancanana	Vedapañcānana
Venkata Bhatta	Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa
Vidagdhamadhava	Vidagdhamādhava
Vidyapati	Vidyāpati

Vidyavacaspati	Vidyāvācaspati
Vijayadasami	Vijayādaśamī
Vijnanamayakosa	Vijñānamayaskoṣa
Vilapakusumanjali	Vilāpakusumāñjali
Visistadvaitavada	Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda
Visnu	Viṣṇu
Visnubhakti	Viṣṇubhakti
Visnupriya	Viṣṇupriyā
Visnupriya Devi	Viṣṇupriyā Devī
Visvambhara	Viśvaṃbhara
Visvarupa	Viśvarūpa
Vrajamandala	Vrajamaṇḍala
Vrindavana	Vṛndāvana
Vrindavana Dasa	Vṛndāvana Dāsa
Vyakarana	Vyākaraṇa
Vyapti	Vyāpti
Yamuna	Yamunā
Yamunacarya	Yamunācārya
Yogapitha	Yogapīṭha
Yuktavairagya	Yuktavairāgya

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. *Bangalir Itihas*, Niharranjan Ray, Calcutta, 1980
2. *Bangalir Sarasvata Avadan*, Dineshcandra Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1951.
3. *Banglar Vaisnavadharma*, Pramathanatha Tarkabhusana, Calcutta University, 1939.
4. *Bangla Sahityer Itivrtta*, Vol. II, Asitkumar Bandyopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966.
5. *Bangla Sahityer Ruparekha*, Vol. I, Gopal Haldar, Calcutta, 1363 B.S.
6. *Caitanya and His Age*, Dineshchandra Sen, Calcutta University, 1922.
7. *Caitanyabhagavata*, Vrindavanadasa Thakura, Ed. Sukumar Sen, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhl, 1971.
8. *Caitanyacaritamrta*, Krishnadasa Kaviraja, Ed. Sukumar Sen, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1960.
9. *Caitanyacariter Upadan*, Bimanbehari Majumdar, Calcutta University, 1959.
10. *Caitanyamangala*, Jayananda, Ed. Bimanbehari Majumdar, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1971.
11. *Caitanyamangala*, Locanadasa Thakura, Ed. Atulkrishna Goswami, Calcutta, 1913.
12. *Ethnological Note Books of Karl Marx*, 2nd edition, Lawrence Crader, Van Garkam Company, 1974.
13. *Gauder Itihas*, Vol. I, Rajanikanta Chakrabarty, Maldah, 1909.
14. *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Ed. J.N. Sarkar, Dacca University, Dacca, 1948.
15. *History of Orissa*, Vol. I, Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay, Calcutta, 1930-1931.
16. *Kanha Gele Toma Pai*, Joydev Mukherjee, Jhargram, 1971.
17. *Mahaprabhu Srisrikrishnacaitanya—His Unparalled Personality and Philosophy*, Mahanambrata Brahmacari, Calcutta, 1986.
18. *Sricaitanyadeva*, Sundarananda Vidyavinod, Calcutta, 1946.
19. *Sricaitanyadeva O Tahar Parsadgan*, Girijashankar Roy Chowdhury, Calcutta University, 1957.
20. *Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, S.K. De, Calcutta, 1961.





CAITANYA (1486-1533) Vaisnava saint and mystic and the chief architect of the Gaudiya Vaisnavite movement in Eastern India is regarded as an embodiment of the spirit of Krishna and his consort Radha.

Born in a conservative and decadent society, Caitanya revolted against the established values of the age. The Vaisnavite movement that started with the advent of Caitanya spread all over Bengal and Eastern India and inspired people for about two centuries.

For Caitanya, the legend of Krishna and his divine consort Radha was the symbol of the highest expression of mutual love between God and the human soul. He felt Bhakti (devotion) superseded all other forms of religious practices and conceived it as complete surrender of the Self to the Divine Will.

Although a scholar, Caitanya has not left anything for posterity in writing. However, the poetry, especially the matchless *padas* of Vaisnava poets, from those who witnessed the superb sight of his love ecstacy, have enriched our literature beyond measure. These *padas,* the greater part of which are devoted to Krishna's love for Radha, possess a deep spiritual significance.

A number of biographical works have been written by his followers, the notable among them are the *Karchas* (Notes) by Govinda Das, *Caitanyacharitamrita* by Krishna Das, *Caitanya Mangal* by Jayananda and *Caitanya Bhagavata* by Vrindavana Das.

DR. ASOKE CHATTERJEE SASTRI (b.1929), the author of this monograph, is a critic and scholar of eminence. He is also the recipient of the Griffith Memorial and the Umeshchandra Vidyaratna prizes. Currently he is Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit at the University of Calcutta.

In this monograph, Dr. Sastri has very lucidly summarised the significance of the enormous impact of Caitanya on the religious, social and literary life of Indians.

Rupees Five